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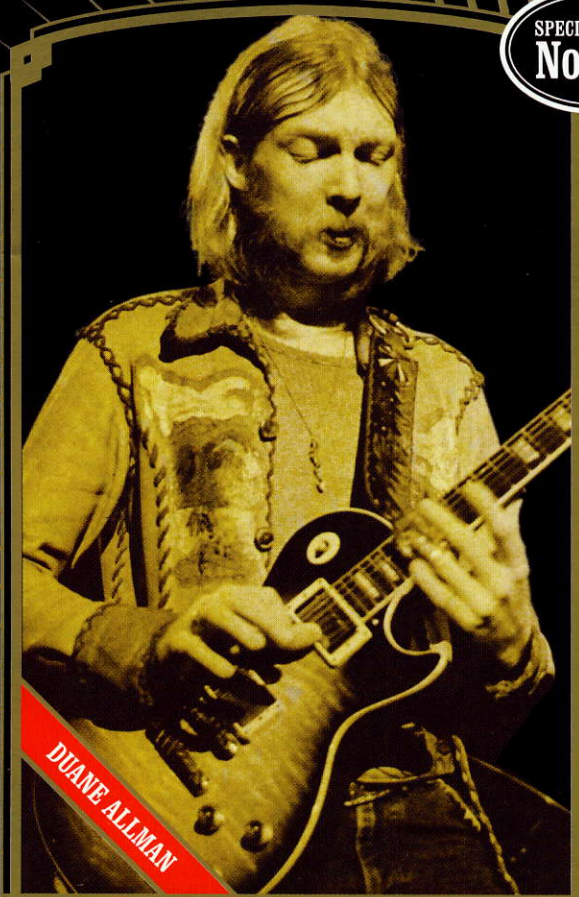
The Complete History of

SOUTHERN ROCK

SPECIAL ISSUE
No. 106



THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND AND LYNYRD SKYNYRD

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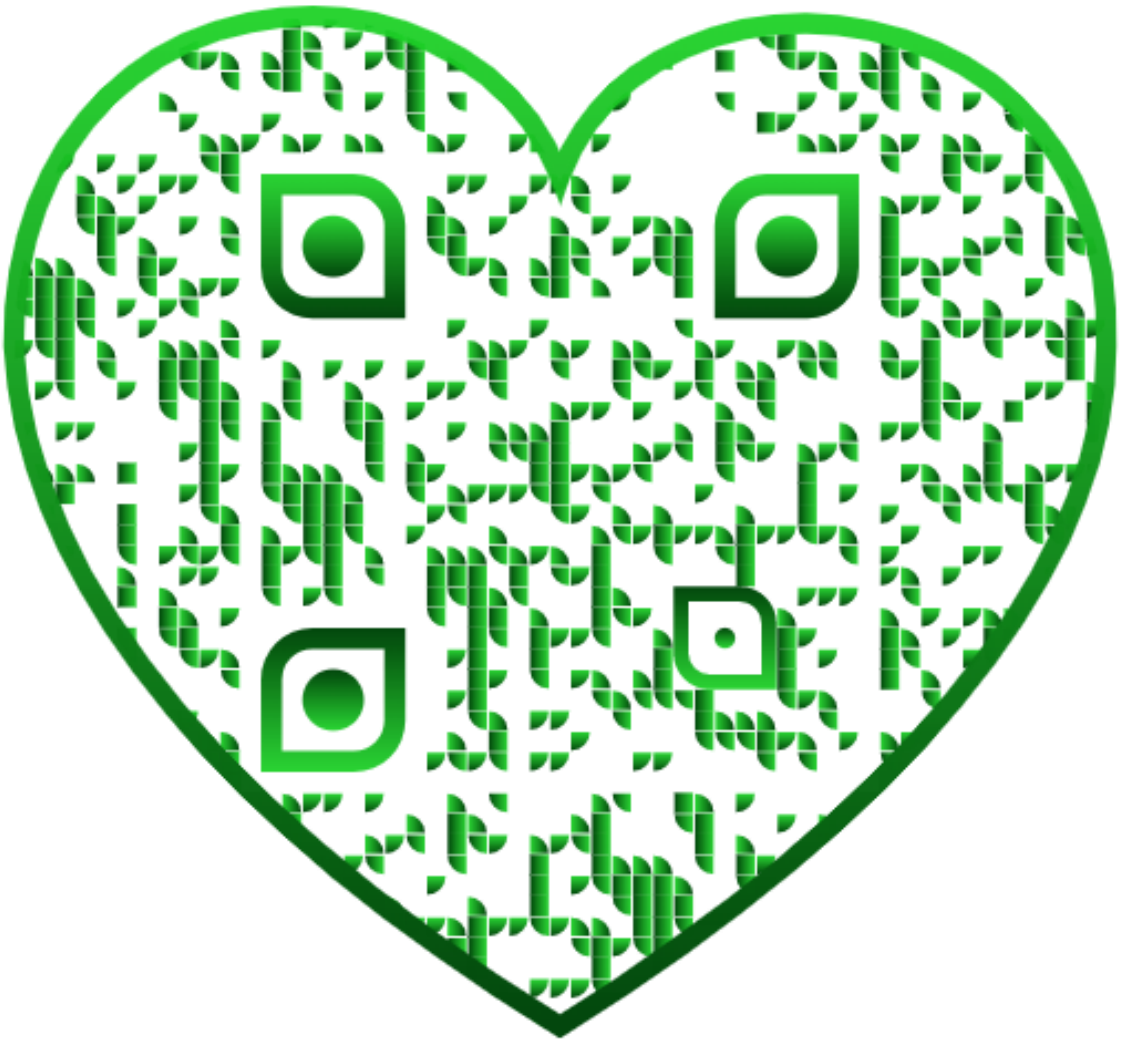

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Cover photographs: **JIM MARSHALL (Allman); RICHARD AARON/RETNA (Rossington)**

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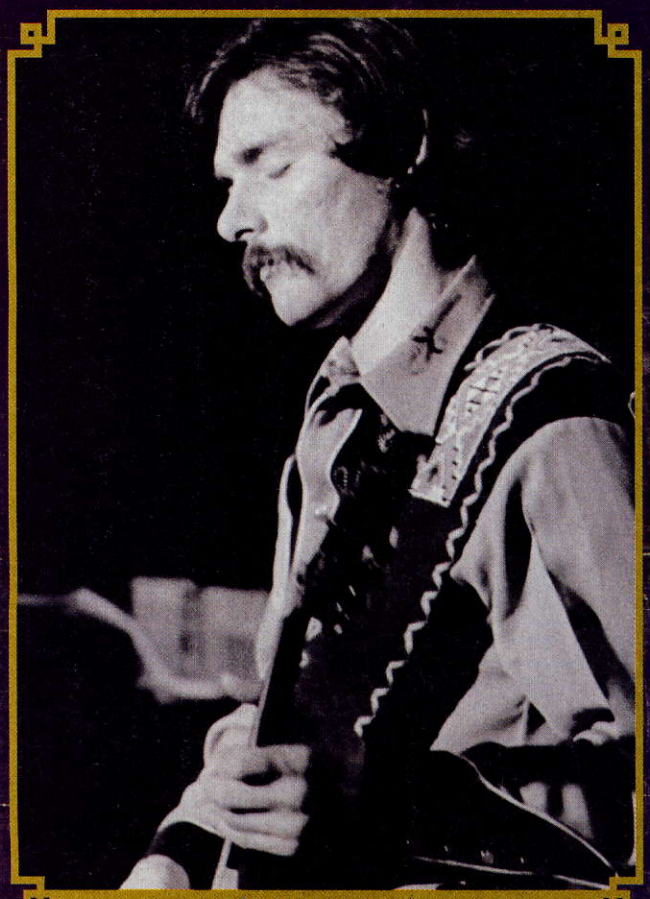
Lynyrd Skynyrd in the mid Seventies: (from left) Billy Powell, Allen Collins, Leon Wilkeson, Bob Burns, Ronnie Van Zant, Gary Rossington and Ed King



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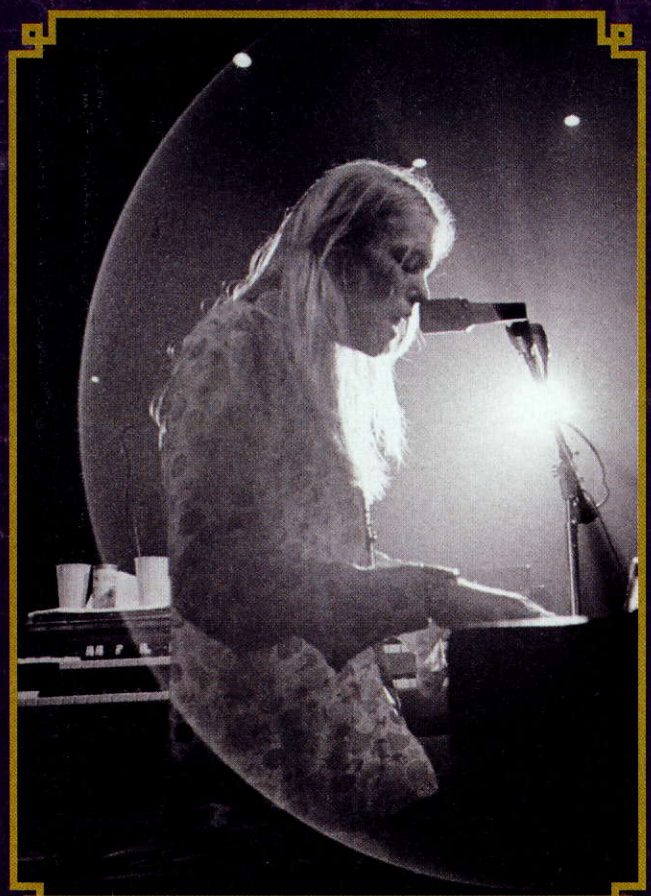


★ GREGG ALLMAN ★

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JIM MARSHALL (BETTS); RICHARD AARON/RETNA LTD. (COLLINS);

Southern by the Grace of GOD

By Alan Paul

Rebels, rednecks and triple-threat guitars. For seven short years, southern rock lived a fast, furious and ill-fated life.

THE FIRST THING YOU HAVE TO KNOW about southern rock is this: there's the Allman Brothers Band, there's Lynyrd Skynyrd, and then there's everyone else.

Rarely has the lineage of a musical genre been more clear. Former Allman Brothers guitarist Dickey Betts, who now performs with his band Great Southern, and most of the other members of the ABB have spent years trying to distance themselves from the term "southern rock," but the fact remains that they are the mountain stream from which the river flows. They started it all. Betts acknowledges as much, even while trying to dodge the tag: "We may have inspired the whole southern rock thing, but I don't identify with it," he says. "I think it's limiting. I'd rather just be known as a progressive rock band from the South."

Betts and company's reluctance to be hemmed in by the title is hardly surprising. It's a paradox that true creators always transcend a genre even while defining it. Surely, John Lennon didn't consider the Beatles a "British Invasion" band, and Kurt Cobain never patted himself on the back for heralding the grunge revolution.

Southern rock occurred in two great blasts, the first set off in 1971 by the Allman Brothers' initial success, and the second ignited by Lynyrd Skynyrd's arrival three years later. Southern rock has remained an ongoing entity and influence, carried on today by the likes of Kid Rock and Kings of Leon, as well as country acts like the Kentucky Headhunt-

The Allman Brothers Band: (from left) Duane Allman, Dickey Betts (hidden), Gregg Allman, Jaimoe, Berry Oakley and Butch Trucks

ers, Travis Tritt and Leroy Parnell—not to mention the current versions of the Allman Brothers Band and Lynyrd Skynyrd. But its heyday as a musical entity was relatively brief, lasting from the Allmans' 1969 self-titled debut to Skynyrd's tragic 1977 plane crash on the heels of their greatest studio effort, *Street Survivors*. The death of Skynyrd as a sparklingly energetic creative entity signaled the start of southern rock's commercial decline, although Molly Hatchet, Blackfoot, .38 Special and others would find success waving the stars and bars for years to come.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

It all began in 1968 when red-hot session guitarist Duane Allman returned to Jacksonville, Florida, looking to put together a band. One thing led to another, and soon he had a hard-rocking outfit featuring two very different, but highly complementary drummers (Jai Johanny Johanson, a.k.a. Jaimoe, and Butch Trucks); an inventive bassist who could hold down the bottom end even while displaying melodic flair (Berry Oakley); and another hot lead guitarist (Dickey Betts). This unusual lineup would become the template for southern rock: two drummers and at least two lead guitarists.

The latter addition proved to be monumental, as Betts and Allman would soon redefine the way two guitarists can work together, completely scrapping the traditional rhythm/lead roles by swapping leads and—in a revolutionary twist—playing harmony lines. This idea came from both the modal jazz of John Coltrane and Miles Davis, which the whole band listened to, and the Western Swing fiddles that Betts grew up listening to.

The unnamed group immediately began playing as often as possible in Jacksonville, often appearing at free Sunday concerts where audience members included three teenagers: guitarists Gary Rossington and Allen Collins and singer/songwriter Ronnie Van Zant. The trio had already been playing in a band for several years and would soon change its name to Lynyrd Skynyrd to mock a high school gym teacher infamous for harassing long hairs like themselves. All three were familiar with Duane from seeing him and his brother Gregg perform in Daytona Beach clubs several years prior. Those shows had helped them determine that they too wanted to be musicians; seeing Duane perform with his extended band inspired them to master their instruments.

"Whenever Duane and them played, Allen and I were the first ones there, hours before the show, so we could stand right in front of him," Rossington recalls, nearly four decades later. "He was mesmerizing, and it's hard to describe the impact it had on us as young guitarists to stand there and see that guy play."

Rossington and company still had lots of woodshedding to do to catch up with their idols. Meanwhile, Duane and company had added Gregg as organist/singer/songwriter, renamed themselves the Allman Brothers Band and moved to Macon, Georgia, where their manager, Phil Walden, was forming a new record company, Capricorn. The Allman Brothers were its first act. Although many at Atlantic, the label's distributor, thought the band should move to New York rather than remaining in a sleepy southern backwater, the group would have none of it.

"Everyone in the industry was saying that we'd never do anything out of Macon, that Phil Walden should move us to New York or L.A. and acclimate us to the industry," Betts recalls. "Of course, none of us would do that, and thankfully, Walden was smart enough to see that that would ruin what we had."

This was a crucial development for the future of southern rock. By staying in Macon, the Allmans had a much greater impact on southern musicians. The small, sleepy city 87 miles south of Atlanta became a magnet, drawing talented and creative people from all over the region, cultivating the careers of countless musicians, many of whom very well may never have made a mark if they had headed North.

"Macon became known as a place to go if you were a musician in the South looking to get something going," explains Scott Boyer of the band Cowboy, which released four albums on Capricorn.

Meanwhile, Duane took time to join Eric Clapton in the studio to record *Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs*, itself a southern rock landmark, and at various times to join up with his pals Delaney & Bonnie and Friends, a rollicking roadshow that occasionally included Clapton.

The Allmans' breakthrough album, 1971's *At Fillmore East*, not only established them as rock's greatest live band but also shored up a struggling Capricorn Records, leading the label to start signing more bands. Soon, albums were coming out of Macon at a furious pace, and the first great era of southern rock was underway. While Capricorn's acts shared a certain sensibility, they were all considerably different from one another. South Carolina's Marshall Tucker Band tempered their rock with

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

PETER MAZEL/SUNSHINE/RETNA

Black eyes and Bandages—Skynyrd in fighting form: (clockwise from top left) Leon Wilkeson, Allen Collins, Ronnie Van Zant, Artimus Pyle, Gary Rossington and Billy Powell

Gregg and Duane Allman at "Summerthing" Sunset Concert Series, Boston on the Common, summer 1971 ; (inset) Duane at "Summerthing"

country, bluegrass, blues and jazz influences; Mobile, Alabama's Wet Willie mined southern soul and kept the guitars relatively toned down; Oklahoma native Elvin Bishop, formerly of the Butterfield Blues Band, played jokey, good-time blues with a twang; and the Dixie Dregs invented a jazzy style of proto-shred southern rock jazz fusion.

When Duane Allman was killed in a motorcycle crash on October 29, 1971, while his band was in the midst of recording *Eat a Peach*, a reasonable observer might have started writing the obituary for southern rock almost before it was born. "Everyone around Macon was just stunned," Boyer recalls. "Duane was such an incredible presence. He had so much energy that he just made things happen. He was always kicking everyone in the butt. It was inconceivable how someone who's that alive could be dead."

Nonetheless, both the Allman Brothers Band and Capricorn Records pushed forward after a brief pause. In fact, greater success for the band, the label and the genre all lie ahead. The Allmans' first post-Duane album, 1974's *Brothers and Sisters*, became their best seller, driven by their only Top-10 hit, "Ramblin' Man." Still, though they toured as the nation's top-drawing band, the album was somewhat of a last creative gasp for the group's first incarnation. Their energy was lagging, and the torch had been passed.

Rossington, Collins and company were no longer sitting around gaping at the Allmans. Influenced by English bands like the Rolling Stones, Cream, Free, the Who and Led Zeppelin, Lynyrd Skynyrd had hardened their sound while they retained its gritty country and blues shadings. Demo tapes recorded as early as 1970 display a remarkably mature, radio-ready band. Still, they couldn't get signed—proof positive that northern record executives still considered Capricorn's success something of a redneck fluke. Capricorn itself was interested in the band, but Van Zant hedged, reportedly because he feared being lost in the shuffle of the label's southern acts.

The group moved to Atlanta and found a home at Funochio's, known by many as the most dangerous bar in town. It was there that they honed their edges and earned their reputation for drinking and brawling as hard and as well as they played. It was also where they were discovered by Al Kooper, the producer/performer who was in town scouting talent for his new MCA-distributed label, Sounds of the South.

As they began to record their debut, which would become 1973's *pronounced 'léh-'nérd 'skin-'nérd*, young bassist Leon Wilkeson panicked and bolted. Needing a replacement, Van Zant tracked down Ed King, a founding member of Strawberry Alarm Clock, a band for which Skynyrd had opened on their first national tour. When Wilkeson returned immediately after the album's recording, King, an accomplished guitarist, switched instruments, allowing the band to duplicate live the album's multiple guitar tracks. And so the next great advancement of southern rock was made. If two lead guitars are good, three must be better!

While many of their imitators would abuse the lineup by almost constantly overplaying, Skynyrd never did, displaying a remarkable restraint in the face of overkill. The band's three guitarists used almost every conceivable method to complement rather than crowd one another, playing harmony lines, arpeggiated chords, complementary fills, even sharing solos by trading bars.

"You just have to know how and when to stay out of each others' way," Rossington explains. "We've always tried to work out our parts to prevent chaos, but a lot of it came from just how long we played together and happened naturally. I think having the different sounds keeps things interesting—especially live. Clapton or somebody of that caliber can stand front and center and solo all night, and it won't get boring. But there's not that many players on that level. And one of this group's trademarks is trading licks."

Skynyrd's debut was released in August '73, but as with the Allmans' initial offering, it didn't catch on right away, despite the presence of "Free Bird," which would soon become a FM radio staple and the national anthem of southern rock. But the band didn't have to wait long for success. Their follow-up album, *Second Helping*, was released less than a year later, and its second single, "Sweet Home Alabama," shot the band to the top of the charts.

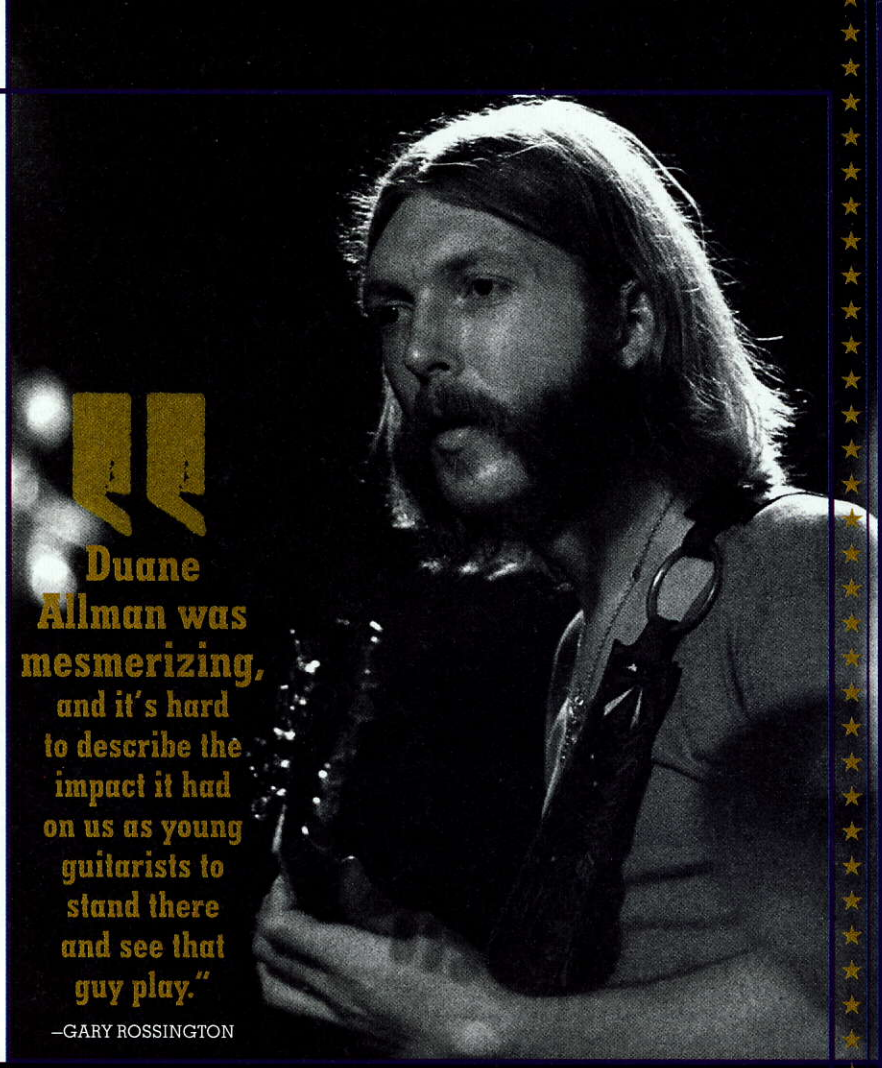
It also set the term "southern rock" in people's heads

for the first time. Here was a song that railed against the Yankee establishment, with snide references to Watergate and a pissed-off rebuke to Neil Young and his outsider's vision of southern men. Shortly after the album's release, Skynyrd also began using a giant Confederate flag as a stage backdrop. And it was their success, coupled with the Allmans' *Brothers and Sisters*, that sent A&R men scrambling through the bars and byways of the South in search of the next big thing.

Among the groups who benefited were the Outlaws, of Tampa, Florida, who signed to Arista Records and issued a self-titled debut album that reflected a wide gamut of southern rock influences, including Marshall Tucker (in the gentle, country-ish "There Goes Another Love Song") and Skynyrd (in the anthemic, solo-filled "Green Grass & High Tides"). At the same time, established Capricorn acts began to have more and more success, most notably Wet Willie and Marshall Tucker.

Meanwhile, Skynyrd were kicking ass and taking no prisoners. But the constant grind of the road was wearing them down. Drummer Bob Burns left the band mid tour, followed by Ed King, both no longer able to handle the pressure. By the time of their fourth album in four years, 1976's *Gimme Back My Bullets*, the band was in a bit of a creative rut. But before they fell too low, they added guitarist Steve Gaines, and the fiery, highly skilled picker and songwriter recharged the group. The results were a kickin' live album, *One More from the Road*, followed by their tightest, most polished studio effort, *Street Survivors*. The same year, the Charlie Daniels Band released their best album, *Saddle Tramp*; Marshall Tucker scored their biggest hit with "Heard It In a Love Song"; and the Outlaws recorded and prepared to release *Bring It Back Alive*, a fully charged live album featuring more guitar jamming than a NAMM convention. Southern rock was back and at an all-time high.

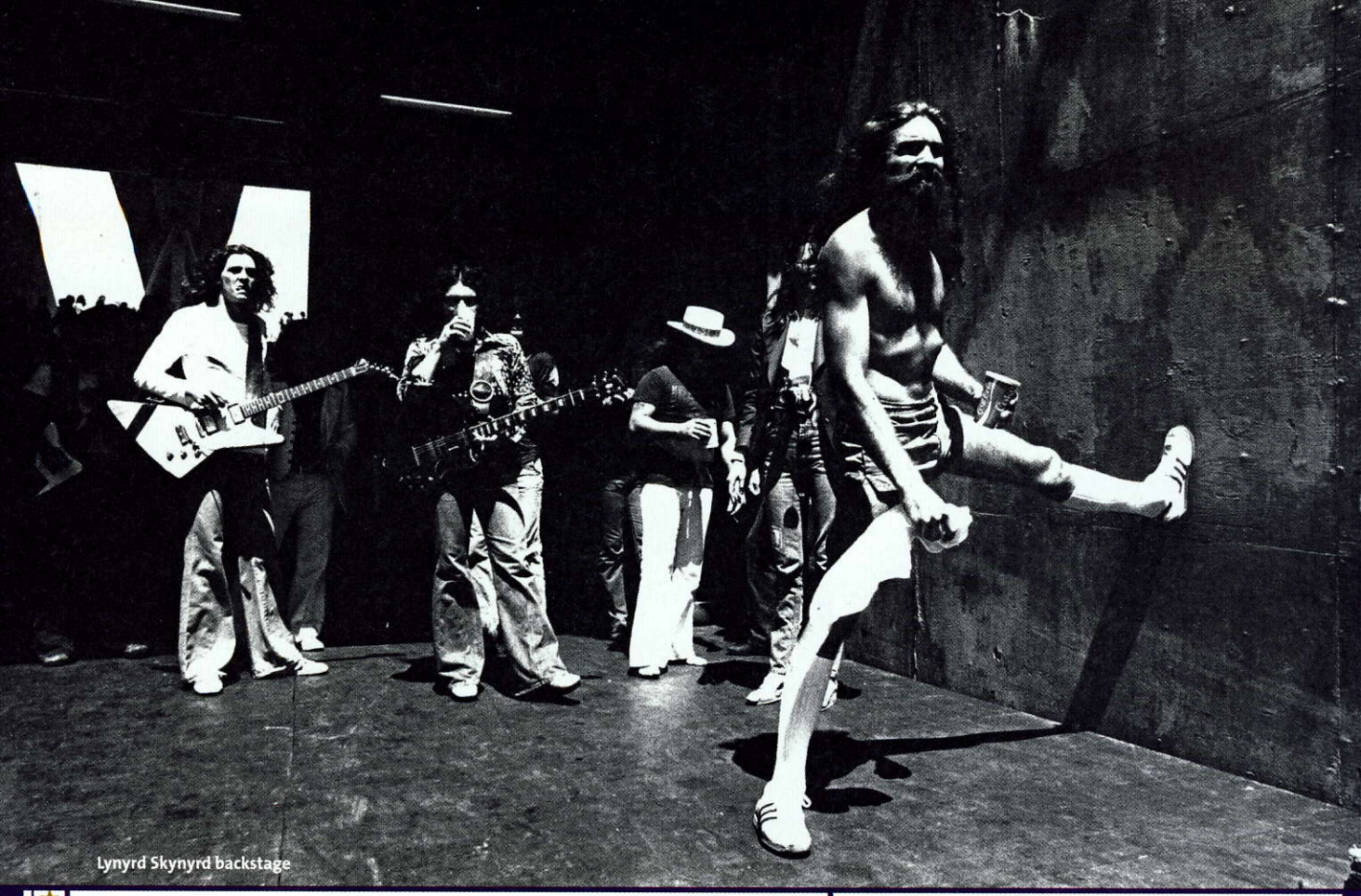
Then, on October 20, 1977, it all changed in an instant. Skynyrd's tour plane ran out of gas and crashed



"Duane Allman was mesmerizing, and it's hard to describe the impact it had on us as young guitarists to stand there and see that guy play."

–GARY ROSSINGTON

Skynyrd performing in Glasgow, Scotland, February 9, 1977



Lynyrd Skynyrd backstage

into the swamps outside of Gillsburg, Mississippi, killing three members, including Gaines and Van Zant, and seriously injuring everyone else. The heart had been ripped out of one of rock's greatest bands—and out of southern rock. With the Allmans having broken up in acrimony on the heels of two mediocre albums a year prior, and Skynyrd now effectively dead, the genre was on shaky ground.

Molly Hatchet would debut the following year, and though they found some commercial and creative success—particularly with 1979's "Flirtin' with Disaster"—they rarely dispensed much more than third-rate Skynyrd imitations. Blackfoot, fronted by former Skynyrd drummer Rickey Medlocke, also made a commercial breakthrough in 1979 with their fine third album, *Strikes*. Charlie Daniels, a longtime presence on the southern rock and country scene, had his biggest hit that year with the fiddle-driven novelty tune "The Devil Went Down to Georgia." But while these and other bands had their moments, southern rock had dried up.

(from left) Marshall Tucker Band, Molly Hatchet and the Outlaws

As a new decade dawned, southern rock's survivors moved ever further away from their roots. .38 Special, fronted by Van Zant's younger brother Donnie, had their biggest hit with 1982's "Hang on Loosely," a generic arena rocker which bore little sounds of the South. The Rossington Collins Band, formed from Skynyrd's ashes, released two decent albums, but never quite recaptured the original band's spark. Even the Allman Brothers, who made a promising return with 1979's *Enlightened Rogues*, released two more lame albums before breaking up again in 1982.

"Southern rock became a parody of itself," says Allman Brothers/Gov't Mule guitarist Warren Haynes. "Much like alternative rock did in the wake of Nirvana."

Skynyrd's Ed King is even more concise—and less friendly. "Southern rock died," he says with a snort, "the day Molly Hatchet came out."

But, of course, a vibrant musical genre can't just die. The music of the Allmans, Skynyrd, Marshall Tucker, the Outlaws and others remained alive in the hearts of listeners and the music of young players. Then, in the late Eighties, the Allmans and Skynyrd—with another Van Zant brother, Johnny, taking over as singer—reunited. To almost everybody's surprise, both are still going strong.

And new generations of musicians have soaked it all in and created their own bend of southern rock, heard most clearly in the music of the Black Crowes, the Kentucky Headhunters, Drive-By Truckers, Kings of Leon, Gator Country, Travis Tritt and Black Stone Cherry. Not coincidentally, the key members of all these bands grew up in the South at the height of the southern rock explosion.

"It had a huge impact," says Haynes, who grew up in Asheville, North Carolina. "We all identified with and felt a connection to the music because it was made by people who looked like us, acted like us and lived like we did. It was the first time the South was taken seriously as a place for great rock music to come from. It let us know that we could make it without changing."

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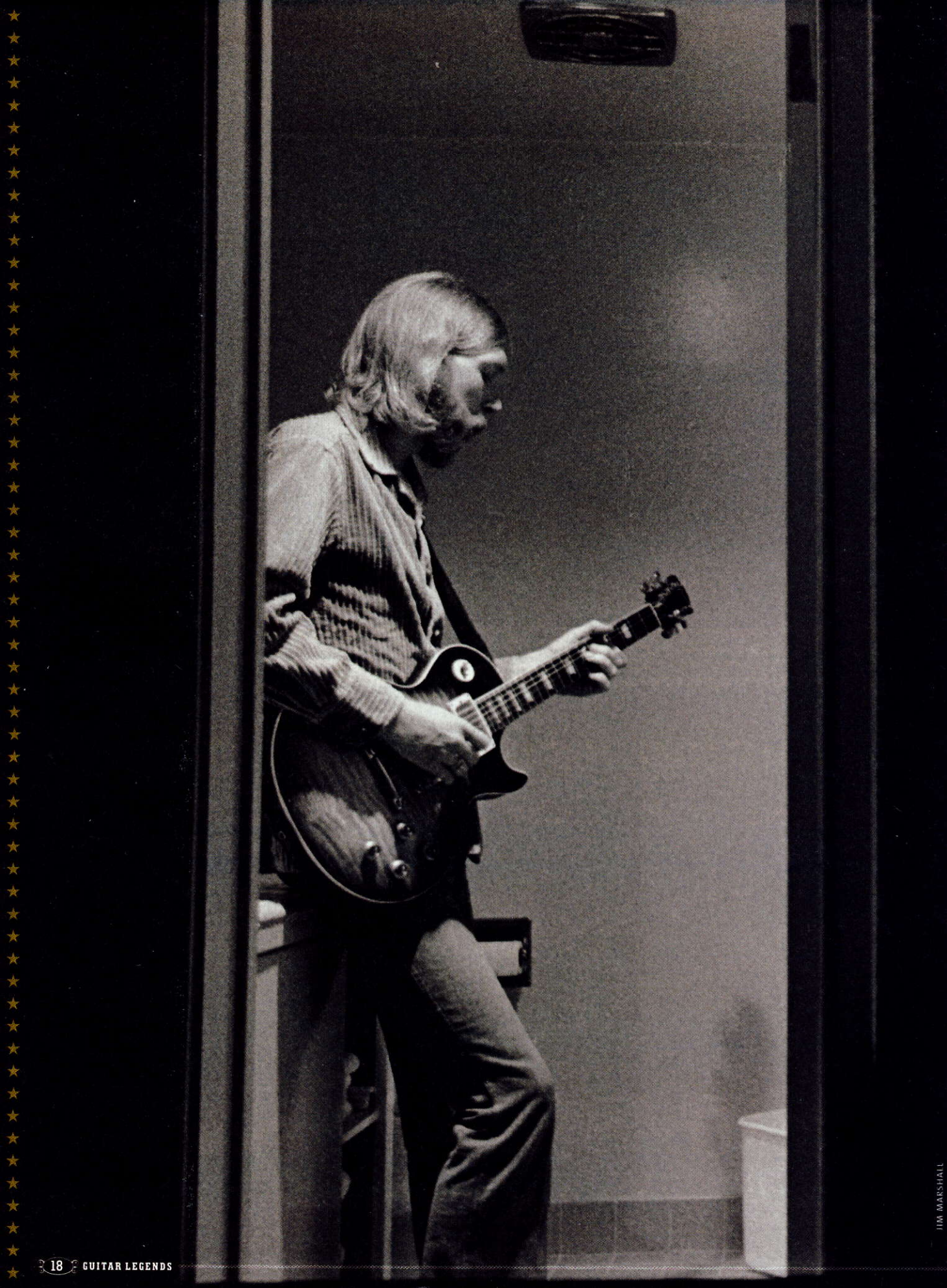


JIM MARSHALL

The Georgia PEACH

By Ellen Mandell

GUITAR 19 LEGENDS ISSUE No. 106

In a freewheeling conversation from 1971, DUANE ALLMAN talks about slide guitar, Eric Clapton, unsung guitar heroes and the pleasures of performing.

WHEN DUANE ALLMAN DIED in a motorcycle accident on October 29, 1971, the Allman Brothers Band were on the verge of a tremendous commercial breakthrough. Their third album, *At Fillmore East*, had reached the Top 10. In addition, the band's practice of nonstop touring was finally beginning to pay off; their audiences seemed to grow larger with each successive show, and the Allmans were being hailed in print as "America's best rock and roll group."

One cannot help but speculate on what might have happened had the brilliant guitarist lived. The Allmans' unofficial guiding light, Duane had just begun to hit his stride, firmly establishing himself as one of rock's greatest players with his performance on *At Fillmore East* and his dazzling star turn on Derek and the Dominos' *Layla* album.

His gutsy slide playing on that album, which inspired some of Eric Clapton's most memorable guitar work, marked the climax of Allman's impressive session history. He previously recorded with everyone from Boz Scaggs to Aretha Franklin, leaving a body of studio work which, considered along with the Allman Brothers' three albums, makes it easy to forget that Duane was only 24 years old when he died.

The following interview originally appeared in *Good Times* magazine in 1971.

ELLEN MANDEL You were 15 when, with your brother's help, you formed your first group, the Kings. Where did you play?

DUANE ALLMAN The Kings played down in Daytona Beach, Florida, a place that is not very conducive to musical growth. We listened to WLAC radio a lot; they take that good stuff and get it to you, no matter where you live, anywhere around there. [*WLAC was well-known in the Fifties and Sixties for its nighttime R&B programs, and its strong signal reached up the East Coast and to the American Midwest.*] The first stuff you hear is so important, man. Like Hank Williams—I love it. The rhythm of it is basically cut and dried, like rock and roll. It's good ol' foot-stompin' stuff! The first stuff I heard was Hank Williams and Flatt & Scruggs on my grandma's old 78 player. When I got a little older, the Dick Clark [*pop music*] stuff started coming on, and I realized that that wasn't for me.

[*That's when*] I started to listen to WLAC. They played some James Carr, some Roosevelt Sykes. Oh, Lord, man! They're just a bunch of crazy old drunk guy playing rhythm & blues records. It's just great! The cat that actually taught me how to play is Jim Sheppley, ol' Lightning Fingers, the first, number-one, taking-care-of-business man in Daytona Beach, Florida—the cat that had it all together if you wanted to learn anything. If you wanted to learn to play something right—*anything*—you'd go to him. The baddest cat. A very influential cat in my life, also. He's dynamite. The smokinest cat. I can't even talk about him, he's so hip. He glows in the dark. He hung up the moon and tells the sun when to come up. Shepp is smokin'!

MANDEL How did you put the Allman Brothers together?

ALLMAN I was working in Muscle Shoals, and [*soon-to-be Allman Brothers' manager*] Phil Walden liked my playing. He said, "Do you want to sign on the line?" So I signed up, and he said, "You've got to get a group and get out on the road." And I said, "Well, yeah, that's for me." And he said, "Listen, I've got this drummer over here in Macon who plays so weird nobody knows if he's any good or not." And I said, "Send him over here and we'll see." It was Jai Johanny [*Johanson, a.k.a. Jaimoe*], and when he came over here, I said, "You're kidding. This cat's burnin.' " So me and Jai got in a car, man, and went to St. Louis and jammed a little bit and went to all the little towns looking for pickers. Then we eased on down to Jacksonville, and Berry [*Oakley, bassist*] met us there. We didn't have any money, and we were huddled around a goddamn fireplace, throwing coal lumps in the fire to keep warm. And Berry and Dickey [*Betts, guitarist*] met us, and Butch [*Trucks, drummer*] was there, too, and they said, "Yeah, man, let's make us a group." And so we all got together in a big house in Jacksonville, and Santa Claus came and brought us a band. It was dynamite!

MANDEL Are you particularly comfortable playing in a group with your brother?

ALLMAN No, it doesn't matter. It's just that he happens to be the best singer going 'round today. You want to work with as good a group of people as you can. I feel like everybody in the band can smoke me. That's why we're in the band together—to keep each other kicking.

MANDEL Who are some of the other artists you've been playing with lately?

ALLMAN Just whoever calls me up. Delaney Bramlett is a partner of mine, and I go play with him and his band [*Delaney & Bonnie and Friends*] whenever I can. Eric Clapton is a prince, and it's a pleasure to go play with him anytime. Making records, well, a lot of it is done for the money, and a lot of it is done for the fun. When I was doing Aretha Franklin records and Wilson Pickett records, I needed the bread, and I was glad to have the opportunity to do it. And I wanted to get away from the band. I was living in L.A. and said, "Boy, the band business stinks, and I don't want any part of it, man! It's terrible!" Then I worked down there on the sessions for a while, and I thought, Wait a minute, man! It doesn't have to be rotten; you just have to make a good one. Then you don't have to sniff anybody's feet to get a break, and you just go ahead and do what you please. So that's what I did. I found five of the smokinest cats I've met in my life, and we hit the road playing.

MANDEL How did you meet Eric Clapton?

ALLMAN I went to watch him cut the *Layla* album. I said to Tom Dowd [*producer for both the Allman Brothers and Derek and the Dominos*], "Man, you've got to call me when he comes to town, 'cause I want to hear him play, and I want to meet him." He's a good player and I've always admired him a lot—his style and everything he ever did. So Dowd told me, "He's going to be in. Come down." So I got down there, and Eric knew who I was—he'd heard some of my records and stuff. And he said, "Okay, man. We're going to make us a record here, and we're going to have two guitar players instead of one." Then we made the *Layla* album. And we worked our butts off on it! It's a good record! Everybody got behind it, with no [*ego*] trip or anything. It's just good music all the way through. And it was a pleasure to do it.

MANDEL I understand that Eric was influenced by your slide playing. How did you develop your approach to bottleneck?

ALLMAN It's all in the wrist. Eric is coming along on his slide. He's doing okay. He ain't no Duane Allman of the slide guitar, but he's doing all right! I heard Ry Cooder playing it about three years ago, and I said, "Man, that's for me!" I got me a bottleneck and went around the house

for about three weeks saying, "Hey, man, we've got to learn the songs—the blues—to play on the stage. I love this. This is a gas!" So we started doing it. For a while, everybody would look at me [*when I picked up a slide*], thinking, Oh, no! He' getting ready to do it again! And everybody would just lower their heads—as if to say, "Get it over with—quick." Then I got a little bit better at it, and now everybody's blowing it all out of proportion. It's just fine for me as a relief from the other kind of playing. It's just playing.

MANDEL Are you planning to add horns to the band?

ALLMAN Yeah! We've got some horn players. We've got some smokers! We've got "Tic Tac" and "Juicy" and "Fats." They'll come and play for us pretty soon. There's a tenor and trumpet and soprano. They are bad, boy, they're kickin' it! The baddest, smokinest, dynamitest dudes ever, man. They can play! A soon as we get the money—as soon as we get famous and rich and get to be stars—we'll hire some more cats. We're waiting for more bucks to come in, so we can hire these horns, man, and maybe get some strings. It doesn't matter how many people you've got in the band, as long as everybody knows what to do. As long as everybody knows how to play, and everybody won't be getting into each other's way and hogging it and not kicking it where it doesn't need kicking. How do you think Leonard Bernstein does it? He sit up there and says, "Okay, you cats over here, you play something." That's how it's done—in rock and roll or jazz or orchestras or whatever you're doing. Everybody's got to work together or it ain't worth a damn. You can't get into a musical fistfight on the stage. It's aggravating and it's obnoxious, and it's no good at all. Either you play together or you play like hell.

MANDEL Did you ever find yourself against somebody you were playing with?

ALLMAN I've jammed with people like that. I've packed my case and duffed very quickly; I don't stay on for that kind of a set. That's nowhere, that's just wasting time. There's a lot of that in New York. One night, though, I had a good-ol' smokin' jam there with a cat named Todd Rundgren, and Buddy Miles. Todd Rundgren, he was doing a little punching and stabbing, and Buddy Miles sat on him a little bit. He said, "Okay, man, just relax, let's do it all together." So then it was all cool, man. What a night. And Buddy Miles blew everybody's head off! He started screaming his guitar line into the microphone, and I just split. I said, "Jesus, you don't need me up here. He can do it all."

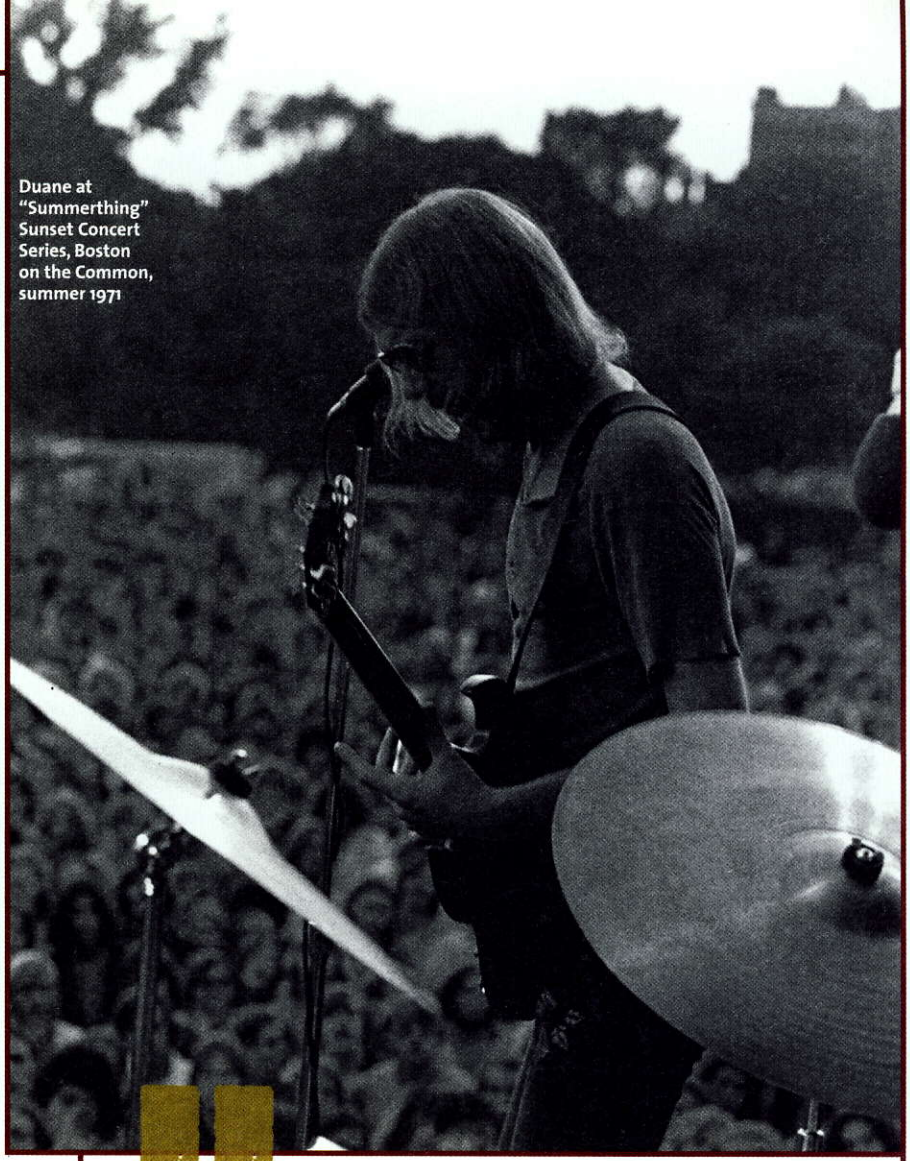
MANDEL Who is the most exciting person that you've ever jammed with?

ALLMAN I'd rather jam with my own band than anybody alive! I've got the best players there are. But I'd like to jam with anyone who likes to play, and anybody who likes to can come around to our set anytime. Now, Jerry Garcia—there's one I love to play with.

MANDEL Do you think that as a result of so many musicians playing in so many groups, music is beginning to sound repetitious? I'm referring in particular to Eric Clapton's first solo album and the Delaney and Bonnie albums.

ALLMAN You mean everybody's taking on each other's style? Well, that's a lot of fun. Eric's real music, though, is on *Layla*. When you hear that music, it's as if he himself were playing in the room. That album is just what he's like.

MANDEL How has your southern background influenced your music?



Duane at "Summerthing" Sunset Concert Series, Boston on the Common, summer 1971

PETER TARNOFF/RETNA

> **"Either you play together or you play like hell."**

ALLMAN I don't know! You can't ask about something like that. How do *you* think it's affected our music? You could look at it objectively, but I was busy doing it, so I don't know.

MANDEL Where do you like to do most of your recording?

ALLMAN It doesn't matter; any place with good facilities. There's a standard, and anything above that standard is great. I'd love to cut something in Jimi's studio, Electric Ladyland, on Eighth Street [*in New York*]. If it didn't cost so much, we would. I bet that place is fantastic.

The Atlantic studio in New York is great, but my favorite thing about Atlantic isn't the facilities—it's the people. They have done me right. They've got heart. They've got guts. They've got balls. They are out of sight. Every one of them, starting with Ahmet [*Ertegun, Atlantic president*], and down to C.B., the cat who answers the door. I have no complaints. And I've been through a lot of jive-ass record labels that I'm not even going to talk about, because it's not very pleasant. But Atlantic is the one, because they can feel it.

MANDEL What have you learned from traveling across the country?

ALLMAN That everything's the same everywhere—that there are nice folks and assholes, and you have to learn to distinguish between the two in order to get by. And someone who's an asshole to somebody may be a nice folk to somebody else, so you've got to learn to be nice to everybody and show everybody respect. That's the only way people respect you. You've got to have mutual respect and a little bit of love if you can round it up. And don't be afraid to share what's inside of you with other people. That's the only way you're ever going to get free, or have any fun at all. So just rock on, and have a good time. If I have a choice between having a good time and a shitty time, I'm going to have me a good time, because I've had enough shitty times.

(back row, from left) Leon Wilkeson, Artimus Pyle, Allen Collins, Billy Powell, Gary Rossington and Steve Gaines; (front, from left) Jo Billingsley, Leslie Hawkins, Ronnie Van Zant and Cassie Gaines

Lynyrd Skynyrd: A Southern GHOST STORY

By Jaan Uhelszki

GUITAR LEGENDS 23 ISSUE No. 106

Fist fights, premonitions and a plane that fell from the sky. This is the tale of RONNIE VAN ZANT and LYNYRD SKYNYRD.

"YOU KNOW HOW THEY ALWAYS SAY, 'Who died and made you boss?' " The soft Florida drawl of Lynyrd Skynyrd guitarist Gary Rossington purrs over the telephone. "Well, Ronnie did." His voice catches somewhere between a laugh and a cough.

Rossington's broken bones healed long ago, but they still ache when the weather turns cold or rainy. The pain, the scars and the metal rod in one arm are frequent reminders of October 20, 1977, the day Lynyrd Skynyrd's plane went down near McComb, Mississippi.

Among the dead: lead singer Ronnie Van Zant, guitarist Steve Gaines and his sister Cassie (one of the Honkettes, Skynyrd's backing vocalists), road manager Dean Kilpatrick and the aircraft's two pilots.

Rossington doesn't need aches and pains to remind him of that day. It will haunt him forever.

"I used to send flowers to the graves every October 20th for about 10 years. And then Judy [*Van Zant Jenness, Ronnie's widow*] told me, 'Just quit. Because people just steal them the same day.' It doesn't hurt and freak me out like it used to, but it's in the back of my mind and hard all that day. Right around the evening time when it happened, that's when it really gets weird, and my wife, Dale, leaves me alone."

Rossington and the rest of the band and crew—numbering 20 in all—survived their injuries, but they struggled with the aftermath for years. Drug addiction. Paralyzing car wrecks. Divorce. Suicide. Murder. Accusations of sexual and spousal abuse... It seems as if some terrible curse has been determined to lay its claim on the surviving members.

No one who survived that day can forget that Van Zant, then 29, had repeatedly proclaimed that he would not live to see his 30th birthday. He died 87 days before that pivotal date.

The tale boasts all the elements of a southern gothic soap opera. Or a modern-day ghost story. Was this litany of woe what Van Zant had in mind when he insisted matter-of-factly to his wife, bandmates, family members, audiences and this journalist that he wasn't long for this world?

"When I heard that there had been a plane crash, I just knew Ronnie was one of the ones that didn't make it," Judy Van Zant Jenness recalls. "He told me so many times that I realized that he really knew what he was talking about."

Former Skynyrd drummer Artimus Pyle was often nearby when Van Zant foretold his own demise. "We were in Tokyo at some bar, and we were drinking lots of sake," Pyle recalls. "Ronnie told me, 'I am never going to live to see 30.' I said, 'Bullshit, man.' But he said, 'No, no, I want to go out with my boots on.' "

"Ronnie was the only one of my children who had second sight," his late father, Lacy Van Zant, recalled in 1995. The bearded octogenarian was slumping heavily in his La-Z-Boy Recliner. As he leaned over to spit the bug-coloured juice from his Red Man chewing tobacco into an empty plastic milk carton, he looked me straight in the eye to see if I believed him. I did.

(from left) Wilkeson, Powell, Van Zant, Rossington, Bob Burns, Collins and Ed King in 1974

Skynyrd soundman Kevin Elson is another who heard Ronnie foretell of his early demise. "I think it was because he lived hard every day, and anyone who does that—like Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix—is gone by the time they're 28 or 29," says Elson, who went on to produce Journey, Mr. Big and Night Ranger, among others. "He and [*assistant road manager*] Dean Kilpatrick were the same. They were like, 'I have this funny feeling about this. I don't think I'm going to make it.' "

Elson was also on that rented twin-engine plane the day it fell out of the Mississippi sky. Had he been older and wiser, he says, he never would have climbed those rickety steel stairs.

"We had problems on the plane before that last flight," Elson says. "We had a day off, then a show, then a day of flying." They flew a mechanic in from Dallas who was supposed to repair everything. Though the band remained wary of the plane's condition, everyone had confidence in the pilot. "Except Cassie Gaines," explains Elson. "But it was one of those things where intuition should have been followed. Cassie said, 'I'm going to ride in the truck,' but she changed her mind at the last minute. There was so much leading up to that. Now as an older person I can see it. Man, all the signs were there."

It didn't stop there. Van Zant told journalist Jim Farber three months before the plane crash, "I wrote [*"That Smell"*] when Gary had his car accident. It was last year and Allen [*Collins, Skynyrd guitarist*] and Billy [*Powell, keyboards*] also were in car accidents, all in the space of six months. I had a creepy feeling things were going against us, so I thought I'd write a morbid song."

The oft-told, star-crossed saga of Lynyrd Skynyrd has been portrayed as the convergence of opportunity, preparedness, talent and luck. What were the chances of Dylan associate, Blues Project founder and producer extraordinaire Al Kooper, walking into an Atlanta dive in the summer of 1972 and spotting this band?

Kooper had just persuaded MCA Records to bankroll his Sounds of the South label in an effort to compete with Phil Walden's Capricorn Records, home to the Allman Brothers Band. Kooper was bowled over by Skynyrd's professionalism, arrangements and guitar work, but mostly by short and stocky lead singer Van Zant, who showed up in a black T-shirt and droopy jeans.

"At first he annoyed me, because he was a mic-stand twirler," Kooper says from his home in Boston. "He was the drum major of Lynyrd Skynyrd, but instead of a baton he had a microphone stand that was, by the way, lightweight aluminum—it only looked like it was heavy. That just got me. Plus, I was amused because he left his shoes on the side of the stage. But looks didn't really matter to me. The music was incredible. How can you not respond to the first time you hear 'I Ain't the One' or 'Free Bird'?"

In Kooper's eyes, Lynyrd Skynyrd were his Allman Brothers, the jewel in the southern rock crown. Skynyrd transcended the southern rock genre with their swaggering, dangerous music that conjured the dark fury of betrayal, perfidy or just plain orneriness and hopelessness over the diminished prospects of the rural south.

These were guys who never expected anything but wanted everything. You could hear it in the antebellum taunt of "Sweet Home Alabama," to the prosaic plea of "Gimme Three Steps," and the stately requiem of "Free Bird." That anthem-turned-albatross began life as a wistful love song about a man who was trying to extricate himself from a claustrophobic relationship. It grew to epic stature when they grafted on a mad combative closing coda that builds and tumbles on itself, then doubles back again, making a nine-minute sonic edifice that stretches right across the Mason-Dixon line, purloining fills from Duane Allman and travelling all the way to London to sit at the right hand of Jeff Beck, siphoning off his "Beck's Bolero" riffs.

Skynyrd were always more influenced by second-wave British invaders (Eric Clapton, Free and the tough, garagey thud of the Rolling Stones, Kinks and Yardbirds) than by the Allmans' jazzy, free-wheeling improvisations. With their tales of beautiful losers, thwarted romance and dashed ambition, Skynyrd were a more menacing bunch. Peace, love and understanding never made it to Jacksonville. Van Zant's lip would curl into a surly half moon as he spat out the lyrics to "On the Hunt," "Poison Whiskey" or "Things Going On."

The attitude and the lifestyle that nurtured it were captured in the sneeringly sarcastic "Working for MCA." The song was written for the Sounds of the South launch party, held at Richard's in Atlanta on Sunday, July 29, 1973, where Skynyrd and other hopefuls performed for jaun-

GEMS/REDFERNS/RETNA

Performing at Day on the Green, Oakland Coliseum (Oakland, California), July 2, 1977

diced record executives, radio programmers, disc jockeys, promoters, rock critics and T.Rex's Marc Bolan, all of whom flew in on MCA's tab. During the song's performance, Van Zant stood in one spot barely moving, his bare feet squarely planted on the stage as he spat out lyrics that told the myth behind the band's creation. "Seven years of hard luck comin' down on me/From a motorboat, yes, up in Nashville, Tennessee/I worked in every joint you can name, yes, every honky tonk/They all come to see Yankee slicker, saying, 'Baby, you're what I want.' "

Behind him, a wall of guitars wailed. Ed King, the Strawberry Alarm Clock expatriate who'd been hired to play bass on Skynyrd's debut album, *pronounced 'léh-'nérd 'skin-'nérd*, had switched to guitar, ripped off notes that nibbled at the far ends of psychedelia, his Stratocaster filling the psychic gap between Collins' Gibson Firebird and Rossington's Les Paul. Behind them, the rhythm section of Powell, bassist Leon Wilkeson and drummer Bob Burns played with military precision.

The press and hangers-on were out of their chairs from the very first assault of "Working for MCA" to the final lingering note of "Free Bird." So devastating was Skynyrd's performance that the other acts showcased at the event—Mose Jones and Elijah—were forgotten. Lynyrd Skynyrd, that seven year work-in-progress, were ready at last.

Gregg Allman said upon meeting Ronnie Van Zant in 1972, "Are you the guy that's trying to sound like me?" Anyone actually listening would know that wasn't true. Maybe it had more to do with the fact that Allman once dated Van Zant's winsome wife, Judy. There was always a whiff of competitiveness between the two of them.

With their take-no-prisoners attitude, Skynyrd earned themselves a formidable reputation as contenders. "When we get on that stage, it's war," Van Zant told me in 1975. "There are no friends, no relatives. We are there to win."

"I loved and respected Ronnie Van Zant. But I have seen the man turn into the devil right in front of me and hurt people."

—ARTIMUS PYLE

He drilled his band mercilessly, driving out to Green Cove Springs, Florida, to a little tin shack on 90 acres north of Jacksonville. This sweltering shed, which quickly earned the nickname "Hell House," became the boot camp where Van Zant molded his raw recruits into musical men. He picked up his bleary-eyed and grumbling troops in his battered old '55 Chevy truck every morning at 7:30 A.M., stopping for jugs of coffee at the donut shop where his mother worked. By 8:30 he'd be putting his charges through their paces in workdays that regularly ran eight to 12 hours. Sometimes they wouldn't straggle back until the next morning.

It paid off. With Kooper's help, Skynyrd landed the support slot on the American leg of the Who's *Quadrophenia* tour. They went from headlining small venues in the south to performing in front of 20,000 at some of America's largest facilities. At their first show at San Francisco's Cow Palace, they saw how daunting it could be. The audience pelted the little-known band with quarters, ostensibly to get them off the stage. "And damn that hurt," Van Zant said at the time.

But almost half an hour later, that same audience called Skynyrd back for an encore. "No band that has ever opened for the Who has ever gotten an encore," Who manager Peter Rudge remarked at the time. Before you knew it, Rudge was managing Skynyrd.

"They were immediately affected by the presence of the Who," remembered Bill Curbishley, Rudge's management partner and current manager of the Who. "They wanted to be crazier than Keith Moon. They wanted to be more everything than the Who. They were naturally a bit crazy in various ways, and all that meeting with the Who did was light the fuse. It also gave them a hunger and a drive and a motivation.

"I was touring with them quite a bit in Europe, and

MICHAEL ZAGARIS

Collins and Pyle transcend the southern rock genre with a Jack Daniel's–swilling chimp on roller skates, at the Academy of Music, New York City, in October 1976; (below) performing at the Academy of Music

I felt this was a band that could have gone all the way. I think they made the type of music that transcended fashion. I think they would have stuck in there. Punk or alternative wouldn't have damaged them."

Even so, damage was already happening within the group's ranks. In late 1974, on the band's first overseas trek, their first drummer, Bob Burns, snapped in a northern England hotel room, a breakdown the others say was triggered by an unhealthy number of viewings of the hit film *The Exorcist*. Burns, who'd been playing poorly and suffering Van Zant's wrath regularly, freaked and tossed the hotel's beloved resident cat out his fourth floor window. He later went after the road manager with a pickax. Somehow the band got through the two-week tour, but they made a point of putting Burns on a separate flight home.

As it happens, the members of Lynyrd Skynyrd were united by one strange thing: the bandmates, almost to a man, had lost their fathers early on. Artimus Pyle's dad had perished in a plane crash that chillingly resembled the one that felled the band; it took off from the same Greenville, South Carolina, airport from which the band's plane departed on its final flight. Rossington's father died while he was still a toddler, and Ed King's dad had committed suicide. Allen Collins' father hadn't died but had been absent; he'd reappeared in King's life "about the same time the [*band's royalty*] checks did," according to one band member. Leon Wilkeson's father was alive, as well, but was "the weirdest human being I had ever met in my life," according to King. "He was abusive—a nasty, mean little man with the personality of a thumb."

Ronnie Van Zant assembled this fatherless regiment, all in need of guidance and direction, and hammered it into a touring and recording machine.

"Hammered" was the operative word. Van Zant had no compunction about hitting a band member across the mouth if he saw some dereliction of duty. Like the time Leon Wilkeson was caught staring at a girl's breasts. Or when Ronnie caught Wilkeson drinking wine during "Free Bird." Or when he knocked out two of Billy Powell's teeth. Or the time in Hamburg, Germany, when he smashed a bottle and gored the back of Rossington's hands with it, hissing, "I'll do it without you!"

Skynyrd transcended the southern rock genre with their swaggering, dangerous music that conjured the dark fury of betrayal, perfidy or just plain orneriness and hopelessness over the diminished prospects in the rural south.

"I loved and respected Ronnie Van Zant," says Pyle. "I mean that from the bottom of my heart. But I have seen the man turn into the devil right in front of me and hurt people."

"If we were the Beatles, Ronnie was the mean Beatle," says Rossington. "He was super mean *and* super nice."

"They were all mean around here," remembered Van Zant's mother Marion. "But Ronnie was the meanest of them all."

"Ronnie's meanness—they all have it," remembers Jeff Carlisi, a neighbor of the Van Zants and bandmate of Ronnie's younger brother, Donnie Van Zant, in .38 Special. "He grew up in Shantytown [*Jacksonville's rough-and-tumble west side*]. Violence was just part of the culture there. If you didn't fight for it, somebody would take it from you."

By most accounts, Van Zant was largely full of ire when he drank. Judy Van Zant Jenness recalls the day Ronnie knocked out Billy Powell's teeth. "I was there that day, and that was not a pretty day. What set him off? Alcohol...the temper of the Van Zants. They all grew up in the house with Lacy. One thing breeds another, you know. It's passed on and on."

Lacy Van Zant was a Golden Gloves boxer, with no fewer than 36 bouts under his belt. From an early age he taught his eldest son Ronnie—named after his favorite movie star, Ronald Reagan—not only how to fight but also how to hurt.

"I started teaching him how to box when he was two-and-a-half years old," remembered Van Zant's father in 1996. "He was very, very intelligent, but he had a high temper. If he couldn't get his way, he'd run across this room and butt a hole right in the

TOP AND BOTTOM: RICHARD E. AARON/RETNA

Collins performing with his Firebird

MICHAEL ZAGARIS

wall. I taught him if you really wanted to hurt a man you'd hit him across the face. Don't hit him straight in the face, you'll only break his nose."

Over the course of his life, Ronnie Van Zant was arrested 12 times—five of them occurring during the last year of his life—and he had suffered enough bruises of his own to show he didn't always pick on the little guy. Parked outside a club in San Francisco, a rather large Chicano man wandered onto their tour bus, called "the Great White Wonder," demanding to have a look around. Van Zant took umbrage to the intrusion and lost no time in raising his fists and thumping the intruder on the side of his head. The man scrambled off the tour bus, with Van Zant in pursuit, only to be met by a crowd of the man's pals—bigger, brawnier and more lethal than their friend. Before 10 minutes had passed, Gary Rossington had joined Van Zant at the bottom of a bloody heap. The singer suffered facial injuries that required he wear sunglasses onstage.

"I remember we were on the bus and Ronnie would be lying there with two pieces of raw meat on his eyes, and he'd wear sunglasses during the show. At the end of 'Free Bird' he'd get rid of the mic and take off his sunglasses and stare at the audience," recalls Billy Powell. "And the whole front row would go 'Wow.' "

Chris Charlesworth, a former *Melody Maker* journalist who became Skynyrd's press officer, believes a sense of self-reliance was at the heart of Van Zant's frequently ornery personality. "He was the sort of guy that pulled himself up by his bootstraps. He figured, Well, if I continue to do it my way, I'll do okay. I've proved this to myself, so why should I listen to anybody else? That's the feeling you got from him. Peter Rudge, whom I worked for, was a tough guy too. A brainy guy. If there was any trouble, he could handle it. They were a good pair."

Van Zant and his band became known as offstage boozers and brawlers who would fight among themselves if no external adversaries were available. Their antics reached such proportions that many viewed the airplane crash as a symbolic culmination of the band's violent lifestyle.

Charlesworth, however, chalks the plane crash up to just "dumb bad luck. I don't believe for one minute that the indiscretions of their lifestyle would have led to this. That's superstitious bollocks."

As mean as he could be, there was a Jekyll and Hyde aspect to Ronnie Van Zant. "He'd give you the shirt off his back," remembers his brother Donnie. "He always paid for everything," remembers writer Cameron Crowe, who partially based the band in his film *Almost Famous* on Skynyrd. "When we were in Japan and Jack Daniel's was $75 a bottle, Ronnie said, 'I'm buying.' He was always the first one to reach into his pocket."

Recalls Jo Jo Billingsley, one of the Honkettes, "Ronnie was such a gentleman, he wouldn't let anybody mess with us." Although all three Honkettes were stunning, there wasn't a man for miles who would come near them if Van Zant was around.

"Ronnie had this here charm about him," remembered his mother Marion in 1996. "He could charm anybody. But he was straightforward with everything he did. You could say he always knew his own mind. He never ever changed, either. He saw his old friends when he came off the road and he loved to fish and would fish with anybody. One thing I surely remember is he was very protective of Allen. No one could mess with Allen. He was older than both Allen and Gary. He figured he was supposed to watch them when they were out on the road."

And if you believe in such things, he's watching over them still.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

ABOUT TWO-AND-A-HALF HOURS out of Greenville, South Carolina, en route to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and only three days into the *Street Survivors* tour, the right engine of Lynyrd Skynyrd's chartered 1948 twin-engine Convair suddenly hiccupped and died. The pilot radioed to the Houston Air Route Traffic Control Center, told the staff he was "low on fuel" and requested vectors for a tiny airstrip in McComb, Mississippi. He and his copilot hadn't finished receiving their directions when the left engine quit. The small plane began its death glide into the Mississippi swamp.

Chris Charlesworth was due to travel with the band on that ill-starred night of October 20, 1977. At the last minute his plans had changed, and he decided to meet the band in Baton Rouge. Three decades later, his near miss still chills him.

"Those in the front of the plane came off worse. That's where Ronnie, Steve Gaines, Cassie Gaines and road manager Dean Kilpatrick were sitting," he told *Classic Rock* magazine. "Those at the back were less badly injured. Inevitably, the group and those who were closest to them were up front. That's where I would have sat, because I didn't know any of the crew, who sat in the back."

Recalls Billy Powell, "We hit the trees at what seemed like 100 miles an hour. It

Collins and Van Zant onstage in 1976 or '77; (center) Skynyrd with producer Al Kooper (at mixing console); (bottom) Collins, Van Zant and Rossington circa 1970

felt like we were being hit with baseball bats in a tin coffee can with the lid on. The tail section broke off, the cockpit broke off and buckled underneath, and both wings broke off. The fuselage turned sideways, and everybody was hurled forward. That's how Ronnie died. He was catapulted at about 80 m.p.h. into a tree. Died instantly of a massive head injury. There was not another scratch on him, except a small bruise the size of a quarter at his temple."

Later reports would insist that the singer was decapitated, causing Judy Van Zant to publish her husband's autopsy results on the internet.

The plane was mired in almost three feet of swamp muck in a hardwood forest. The survivors weren't aware that the cause of the crash was due to the pilots running out of fuel, so they feared the plane would burst into flame at any moment.

The sun was setting quickly. Drummer Artimus Pyle and crew members Ken Peden and Mark Frank stumbled through the wreckage and into the darkening evening to find help. Artimus, with a broken sternum and three of his ribs poking out of the skin in his chest, made his way to a farm house a painful three-quarters of a mile away, impelled by one thought. "Every painful step I took was a drop of their blood. I knew that I had to keep putting one foot in front of another."

Scrambling in the dark—fearful of snakes, alligators or worse—the three finally flagged down a farmer named Johnny Mote, who had come to investigate what the mighty noise was that jarred him out of his house.

Unnerved by the sight of a dirty, blood-drenched hippie running toward him, Mote fired a warning shotgun blast. It did nothing to deter Pyle, who still contends that Mote shot him in his right shoulder—a claim Mote denies. When the drummer could finally utter the words "plane crash," Mote called for help, which was long in coming. Rescuers had to cross a 20-foot creek in order to get to the crash site. The injured had to wait in the mud for hours, while police and emergency workers carved out a makeshift road through the woods.

Horrifyingly, it wasn't only help that came. Looters reached the site and pilfered the pockets of the dead and living alike. "They were human vultures," recalls road manager Craig Reed. "All the money that was in my pockets was taken. We had been playing poker right before the crash, and I was winning big. I had a couple of grand that was taken. All my T-shirts were taken. All my jewellery, a skull and crossbones coke spoon—all gone. They went through our suitcases. They took anything that said 'Lynyrd Skynyrd.' They even went out and took the side of the plane that was painted 'Lynyrd Skynyrd.' "

"The thing I think of is the constant telephone calls with Judy Van Zant who was at Ronnie's house," Charlesworth remembers. "All the women, wives and girlfriends of the band and the crew gathered at Judy's house. There must have been a dozen women there. I just couldn't help but try to imagine the horror of the scene. Can you imagine all these women sitting around a table in the house and none of them knowing if their husbands were alive or dead after they'd been in this plane crash? The horror of all these women waiting to hear if their husbands were dead?"

By the next day, the injured were scattered over three hospitals, where some would remain for weeks. Allen Collins injured his spine. Back-up singer Leslie Hawkins had serious facial cuts, while Billy Powell and Artimus Pyle were released from hospitals a week after the crash. Leon Wilkeson suffered a broken jaw, a crushed chest and internal bleeding and was declared dead not once, but three times, waking up only to say he had been sitting on a cloud-shaped log with Ronnie and Duane Allman.

"Ronnie told me, 'Boy, get yourself out of here, it's not your time yet. Get on out of here,' " the bassist told me in

FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: STEPHANIE CHERNIKOWSKI/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES; TOM HILL/WIREIMAGE; MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

1997. This would not be the last time the spectre of Ronnie Van Zant would pay a visit to friends and family.

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AS NEWS OF THE CRASH EMERGED, family and friends hurried to the small Mississippi town where the survivors and dead were gathered. Judy Van Zant was there, as was Billy Powell's ex-wife Stella. Former Skynyrd guitarist Ed King drove through the night and arrived the next morning to see the members of the band he'd left two years before. "I always knew something bad would happen to them after I left," the guitarist recalled.

Skynyrd manager Rudge chartered three planes for family members. Don Barnes, guitarist with .38 Special, accompanied Ronnie Van Zant's father to Mississippi and was with him when he went to identify his son. "The strength that this man displayed was monumental," Barnes says. "Lacy was in denial on the plane and hoped that there was a mistake and that his son was not dead. I had to find out who was where, and we had to get to the funeral home to identify the body.

"We then went to the hospital and saw all the other people who were hurt. They all looked at Lacy through stitches and swelling, and he told me not to say anything about Ronnie. He just said that Ronnie was fine and 'You just get better and rest.' This man had just been to the funeral home and seen his son dead and decided to keep that to himself for these guys to heal. I told him that it was the strongest thing I had seen a man do."

Lacy Van Zant always insisted he warned his son not to get on that plane. "On that last day, he was standing right on this step," said the elder Van Zant, who pointed to a spot about 10 feet from where we sat, "and I begged him not to get on the charter plane. He told me, 'Daddy, that pilot can fly through the eye of a hurricane and land in a corn field.' It turns out that he was wrong."

Ronnie's funeral wasn't held until almost a week later, mostly because his wife, Judy, was falling apart.

"I went into shock when Ronnie died," she says. "I didn't want to hold the funeral until Allen and Gary got out of the hospital. She looks off into the distance, pushing a strand of blonde hair off of her eyes. "But that was impossible. And then I didn't want him buried in the ground. I insisted on a crypt. I know I drove a lot of people crazy, but I wasn't going to put him in the ground and put dirt on him. I know it sounds silly now. It didn't then. So they put up a temporary crypt. Later we had this special memorial service just for Allen and Gary, and we moved Ronnie to his permanent place. Theresa [*Gaines*] decided she wanted Steve and Cassie there, too."

She wasn't the only one who had trouble keeping it together. Lacy Van Zant wore a Lynyrd Skynyrd T-shirt to the 10-minute long funeral service and had to be hospitalized for nervous exhaustion for three days afterward. But before that, he went up to Honkette Jo Jo Billingsley and did something that unnerved her. "Lacy came up and reached down and scooped up a handful of the dirt and wiped it across my mouth and said, 'Kiss this ground you're walking on.' And walked off."

The reason for Lacy's rather strange behavior was because Jo Jo wasn't on that flight. She hadn't been with the band at the beginning of the *Street Survivor* tour—intimates say she had been fired because she was having an affair with Allen Collins—but according to Billingsley, Van Zant called her the night before their show in Greenville to come rejoin the band on the road.

"I thought, well, that's music to my ears," Billingsley told a reporter from swampland.com in 2003. "I said, 'Yes, of course.' While I was talking to him I felt this strange feeling and I heard this word: 'wait.' My spirit was talking to me. I said [*to Ronnie*], 'Well, you were planning to come to Little Rock anyway. Why don't I just meet you there?' And he said, 'Good, bring all your stuff.' I went back to sleep at my mom's, and that night I had the most vivid dream. I saw the plane smack the ground. I saw them screaming and crying, and I saw fire. I woke up screaming, and my mom came running in going, 'Honey, what is it?' I said 'Mama, I dreamed the plane crashed!' And she said, 'No, honey, it's just a dream.' And I said 'No, mom, it's too real!'

"They had already sent me the itinerary, so the next day I called Greenville. I called everybody on the list. Finally, late that afternoon, Allen called me back. He said, 'Jo, what in the world is it? I've got messages all over Greenville from you.' I said 'Allen, it's that airplane.' And I told him about my dream. I said 'Allen, please don't get on that plane.' He said, 'Jo, it's funny you'd mention that, because I was looking out the window yesterday and I saw fire come out of the wing.' "

Billingsley recalls that when she heard about the crash, "the first thing I thought was, God saved my life. The Lord gave me that dream to warn me, and I did the only thing I could do and warned them. It was so weird, because some of them thought that maybe I

The revamped Skynyrd in 1994

JAY BLAKESBURG/RETNA

had something to do with it, but I had nothing to do with it."

A year after the plane crash, Gregg Allman wanted to form a band with Gary Rossington and Allen Collins. "I was acting as the manager for Gary and Allen," says Judy Van Zant Jenness. "I went down to meet with Gregg, who wanted to join up with them. But Gregg wanted them to call it Free Bird, so we dropped the idea. It was probably a good thing. Gary and Allen weren't ready."

It would take them two more years to launch Rossington-Collins. By autumn of 1979, the two guitarists felt confident enough to talk to the press about their new venture, explaining, "We've just been getting together and messing around...doing a little playing and a little thinking, but we're not worried about making any big rock and roll moves." They hired singer Dale Krantz (who later married Rossington, after a rather torrid romance with Collins) and were eventually joined by Skynyrd keyboardist Billy Powell and bassist Leon Wilkeson.

It was the closest they had come to any sense of normalcy after the crash, but it was a fool's paradise. It seemed fate was not done with them yet.

Allen Collins suffered another gut punch while on the road with his new band. After a performance in November 1981, he got a phone call telling him that his heavily pregnant wife had started bleeding in a movie theater and was rushed to a local hospital, where she later died. The guitarist never recovered from the loss. He became even more extreme in his habits, retreating from friends and family. The only thing that seemed to comfort him were rock and roll panaceas: drinking, drugs and driving around in fast cars. Five years after his wife's death, Collins' plunged his car over a ravine, killing his passenger, girlfriend Debra Jean Watts, and paralyzing him from the waist down. Four years later, Collins died from pneumonia that resulted from injuries sustained in the car accident.

"After Allen's wife died, he dove into a bottle and never came out," Billy Powell says. Adds Rossington, "Allen was great. He was so funny, so happy-go-lucky and crazy. But after his wife died, he became real bitter, even with me... He never knew how many people he inspired because he died too early."

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THERE IS SOMETHING UNNERVING about the northern Florida swamps at night. The brackish water is dull, with a green sheen, while Spanish moss drips from the branches of the oak and cypress trees, coating them in poisonous putrid icing. Jittery types like to avoid the still waters of Lake Delancy, one of Van Zant's favorite fishing spots, where people have claimed to have spotted his ghost, dressed in black and striding purposely toward the water with the yellow cane fishing pole he was buried with tucked under his right arm.

Judy Van Zant recalled a dream she had, shortly after she had buried her husband. "About six months after Ronnie's death, I woke up in the middle of the night. As stupid as it sounds, it just felt like he was there. He said that he had three things to tell me. The first, of course, was to take care of Melody [*the couple's daughter*]. The second was not to worry about Allen and Gary, that they could take care of themselves. And the third was he wanted me to know that he was okay. I kept calling to him, 'Come back, don't go away.' I didn't want it to end."

The fact that Van Zant would come back from the dead doesn't much surprise anyone who knew him. According to Skynyrd lore, he had uncanny powers. One story has it that Ronnie could point his finger at a spot in the water and tell his fishing companion to put his pole at exactly the spot and within minutes a fish would be flapping on the hook. And, of course, there were the lyrics to "That Smell," one of the last songs Van Zant wrote for *Street Survivors*. The line "The smell of death's around you" were chilling enough, but they took on a macabre, prescient tone after the crash.

Van Zant had written the song as a cautionary tale to his band members, inspired by Rossington's near-fatal 1977 car crash and the feeling that some of them were pissing away their future with excessive drinking, drugging and carousing. It wasn't only the tragic prophecy of the song that's chilling. In his own circle, it was common knowledge that Van Zant didn't expect to live much longer.

"Ronnie could see the future, always had been able," said his father. "You know, prior to starting the *Survivors* tour, Ronnie gave my brother his best black hat and a beautiful ring that he used to wear. He also gave me several things, including his lawn mower and his 1955 Chevy pickup truck. That led me to believe that Ronnie may have known that he did not have long to live."

Could Ronnie have really foretold his own death? His brother Johnny, who replaced him as the lead singer of Lynyrd Skynyrd, isn't sure. "Things work out in mysterious ways," he says. "Ronnie and Stevie [*Gaines*] were only on this earth a short time. God made his mark on them for them to make their mark on the world. Hell, I don't know if we'll ever figure it out. Fate takes you on whatever road it wants. Some of us take a good road and some of us take a bad road. But if my brother was really so sure he was going to go, don't you think he would have made a will?"

Skynyrd in 1970

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

I pulled into Nazareth,
was feelin' about half past dead
I just need some place
where I can lay my head

– searching for inspiration, he looked inside his D-28 and found Nazareth, 1968

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The Outlaws in the late Seventies: (from left) Harvey Dalton Arnold, Hughie Thomasson, Billy Jones and Freddie Salem

Grass ROOTS

By Andy Aledort

A down-and-dirty lesson in playing the OUTLAWS' biggest hit, "GREEN GRASS & HIGH TIDES."

AS A TRUE SOUTHERN ROCK guitar tour de force, "Green Grass & High Tides" is hard to top. Recorded in 1975 by the Outlaws, that steady-rollin' 18-wheeler of a band, the song stands today as a testament to the pure power and glory of southern rock at its best.

The Outlaws formed in 1973 in Tampa, Florida, hot on the heels of southern rock's earliest success stories: the Allman Brothers, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Charlie Daniels and the Marshall Tucker Band. Their 1975 debut, *Outlaws*, showcased a formidable three-guitar attack that featured Henry Paul, Billy Jones and the incredible Hughie Thomasson. With it, the Outlaws forged an original sound that was equal parts country, pop and blazing rock, highlighted by some of the most ferocious guitar playing ever heard in the genre.

The Outlaws set themselves apart from their southern rock brethren by incorporating majestic three- and four-part harmonies in their catchy, hook-laden songs, aligning the band's sound with such megachart artists as the Eagles and Jackson Browne. This formula proved undeniable, and the Outlaws enjoyed considerable success of their own with such FM radio staples as "There Goes Another Love Song," "Hurry Sundown," "(Ghost) Riders in the Sky" and their biggest hit, "Green Grass & High Tides."

In this exclusive lesson, we'll unravel the song's dense architecture and analyze this massive southern rock masterpiece.

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At the core of "Green Grass" (and most Outlaws songs) is the unique and impressive guitar sound of Thomasson, whose Stratocaster is set on the out-of-phase pickup

position between the middle and bridge pickups. This setting yields a sparkling, crystal-clear sound, even when he cranks up the volume for some high-decibel amp-induced distortion. The use of this unforgiving tone only further illustrates Thomasson's blinding guitar technique, as he effortlessly moves from pristine, Jimmy Bryant–like country licks to torrid, Jimi Hendrix–inspired explosions of sound, all the while displaying flawless articulation.

FIGURE 1a illustrates the slow, dramatic, arpeggiated chord sequence (played by Thomasson, Gtr. 1) that begins the song. Be sure to allow all notes to sustain throughout this figure, which is played "freely" (not in absolutely fixed meter). Note the use of the "C" shape for the D major chord voicing on beats three and four of bar 2. This voicing supplies connective *voice-leading* (each note, or "voice," of one chord moves to the closest note of the following chord) between the G and D major chords used here.

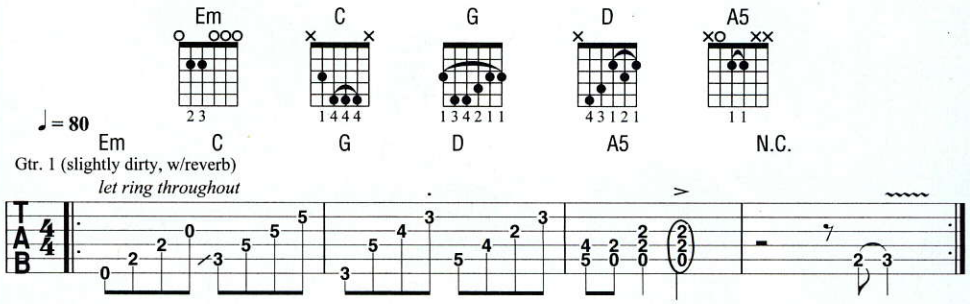
At 0:24, Guitar 2 (Billy Jones) enters, playing the same basic arpeggiated chord pattern as Guitar 1 while incorporating 16th notes into the riff (see **FIGURE 1b**); compare this pattern with **FIGURE 1a** to see the discrepancies between the two parts. Again, allow all notes to sustain throughout.

FIGURE 2 depicts the setup to the tempo change that occurs at 0:45. At this point (0:37), Guitar 1 repeats the initial arpeggiated figure while Guitars 2 and 3 strum the chords, also shown in **FIGURE 2**. This phrase is followed immediately by **FIGURE 3**, which initiates the change to the quite brisk tempo of 200 beats per minute (bpm). (This four-bar rhythm figure is reprised later in the song behind all the outro guitar solos.)

In this example, the three-guitar rhythm part is arranged for one guitar. Listen closely to the recording to hear the subtle differences between each guitar part. One obvious difference is the little triplet hammer-on lick Thomasson uses to end the phrase, shown here as the down-stemmed notes during beat four of bar 4. This lick is not played when the rhythm figure is recalled later in the song.

Prior to the first verse, at 0:53–0:59, Thomasson plays some improvised solo lines that give an indication of things to come. His licks across these seven bars are based primarily on the E minor pentatonic scale (E G A B D), with the brief inclusion of the ninth, F♯. Right before he switches back to the rhythm part, he tosses in a bit of chromaticism by quickly hammering onto frets 5, 6,

FIGURE 1 a) intro (0:00-0:24)



b) variation (0:24-0:37)

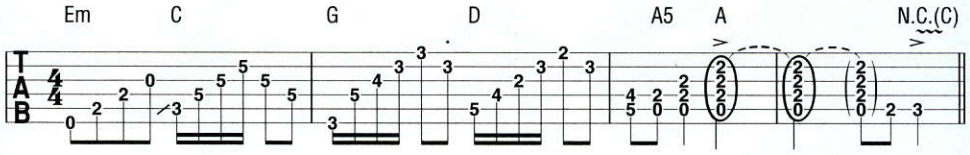


FIGURE 2 set-up to tempo change (0:37-0:45)

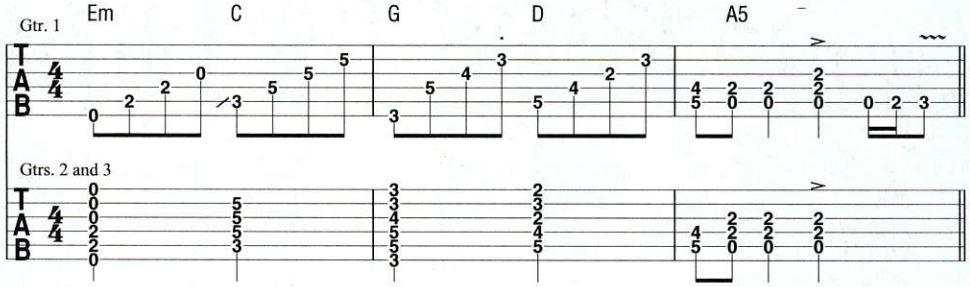


FIGURE 3 primary rhythm figure (0:45-0:50)

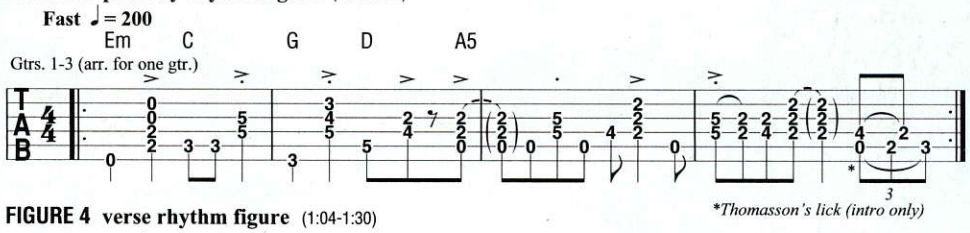


FIGURE 4 verse rhythm figure (1:04-1:30)

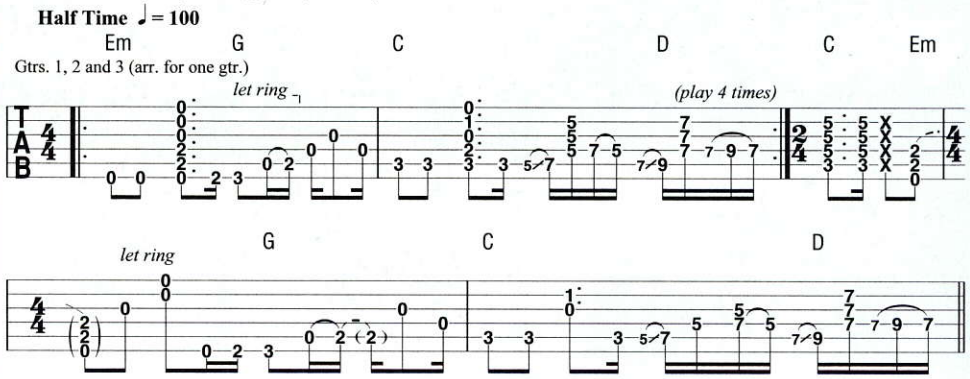
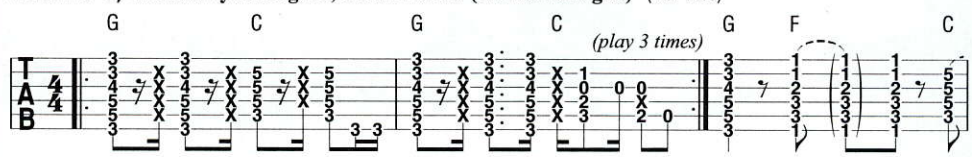


FIGURE 5 a) chorus rhythm figure, Gtrs. 2 and 3 (arr. for one gtr.) (1:57-2:16)



and 7 in succession, alternating from the A string to the low E.

When the verse begins (1:04), the tempo switches to half time (100 bpm). **FIGURE 4** illustrates the verse rhythm part, with all three guitars arranged for one guitar. Notice how effectively this part combines chord accents with single-note licks, providing a solid and equally propulsive rhythm figure. This type of rhythm part is not uncommon in bluegrass music, which provided a large influence on the playing of all of the Outlaws' guitarists. As you play this figure, be aware of the single bar of 2/4, which occurs after the first two bars of 4/4 are played four times.

Following a brief lead break by Billy Jones, the song proceeds to the second verse, for which the rhythm part shown in **FIGURE 4** is repeated. This time, after the same two-bar figure is played four times, the meter remains in 4/4, and a C chord is strummed repeatedly. After a C-G double-stop is slid up to D-A, the song's chorus section begins.

FIGURE 5a shows the chorus rhythm part (1:57–2:16), played by Guitars 2 and 3. Alternating third-position G and C barre chords are accented with a subtle 16th-note syncopation and fret-hand muted strums. Thomasson (Gtr.l) plays a slightly different rhythm figure for this section, adding a 16th-note lick in the second bar of each two-bar phrase (see **FIGURE 5b**). After this two-chord change is played three times, the progression switches to G F C, setting up the return to the Em G C D verse chord progression, which is played behind Thomasson's first guitar solo.

FIGURE 6 illustrates this solo, heard between 2:16 and 3:23. Here, Guitars 2 and 3 play a simple rhythm figure consisting entirely of first-position "cowboy" chords. This two-bar rhythm figure is repeated throughout the solo with slight embellishment.

Thomasson begins this solo section with a workout on bluegrass-type licks, using the notes E, G, A, B and D for improvisation. As previously stated, this set of notes comprises the E minor pentatonic scale, but it may also be thought of as G major pentatonic (G A B D E). G is the *relative major* of E minor. (The root of relative major chord or scale is found one and one half steps above that of a minor chord or scale; likewise, the root of a relative minor chord or scale is found one and one half steps below that of a major chord or scale.) When this group of notes is played over an E minor chord, it sounds like E minor pentatonic; when it's played over a G chord, it sounds like G major pentatonic.

b) chorus rhythm figure (Gtr. 1, Thomasson) (1:57-2:02)

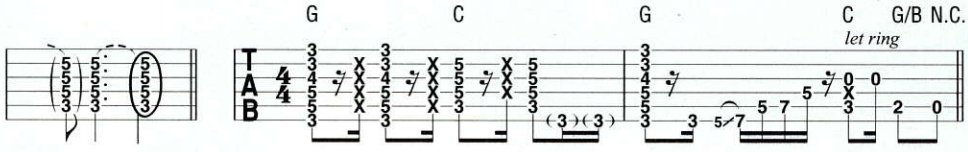
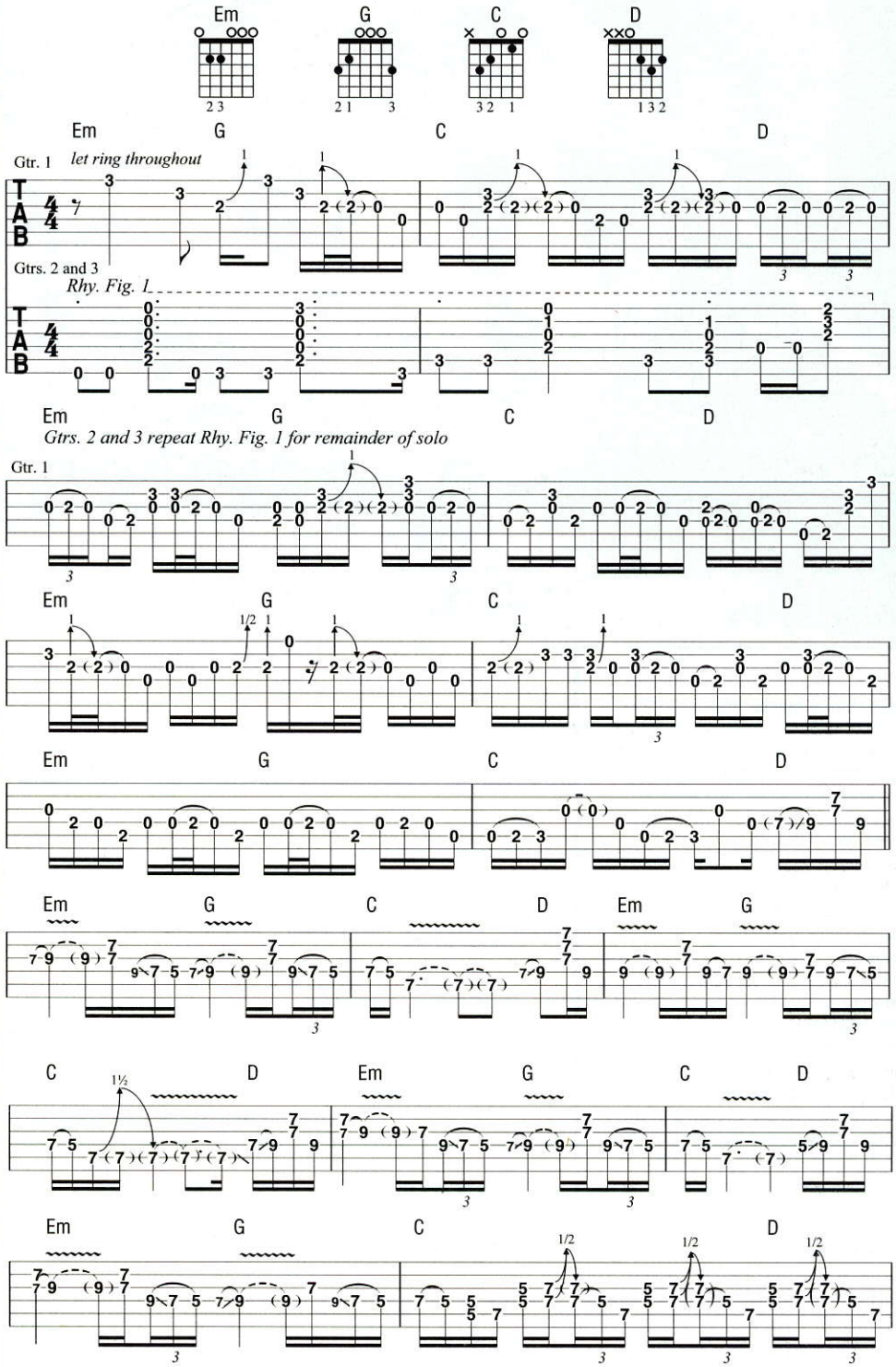


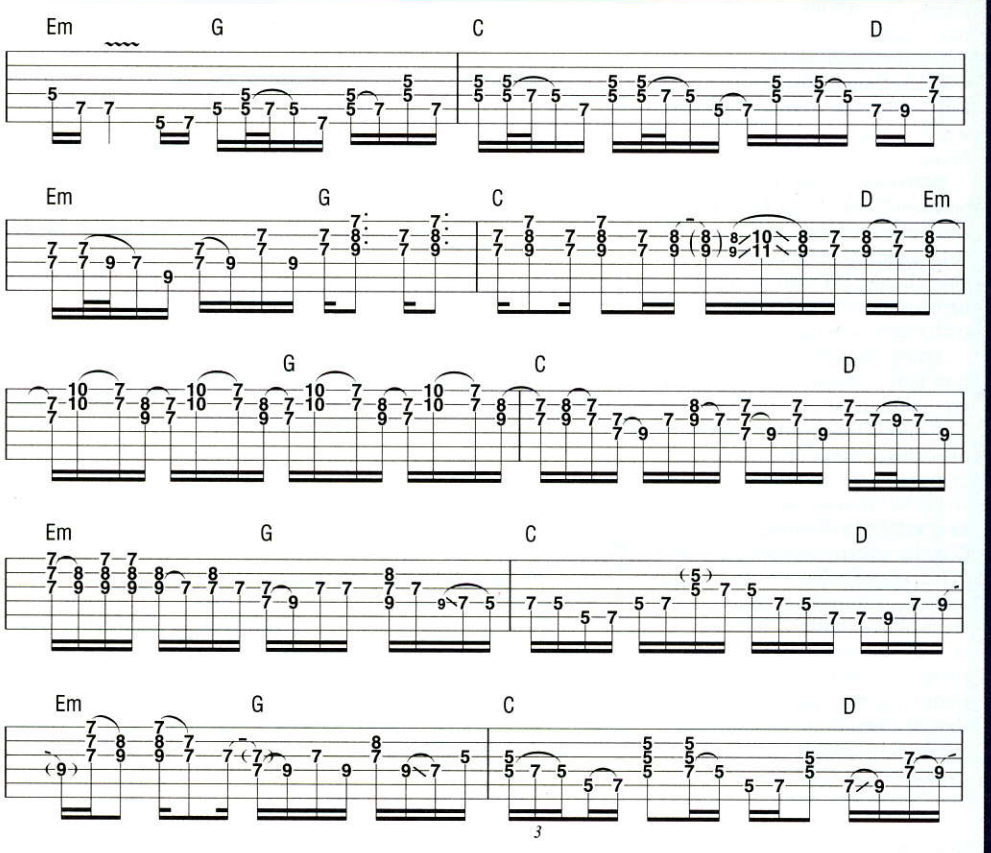
FIGURE 6 Thomasson's first solo (2:16-3:23)



Original bassist Frank O'Keefe (at left) with Thomasson and Jones

Thomasson displays nothing less than a master's touch in his articulation of these phrases, many of which are accentuated with precision bending, pre-bending and unbending of the G string. Across the first four and a half bars, the guitarist keeps the D note at the B string's third fret fretted with his ring finger the entire time; he doesn't lift this finger until beat three of bar 5, when he plays the open high E. Thomasson uses the first eight bars of this solo to play in this bluegrass vein and doesn't deviate from the E minor pentatonic/G major pentatonic scale until the eighth bar, when he throws in a C note, which relates to the underlying C chord in the progression.

Following the double barline (beginning at bar 9 of **FIGURE 6**), Thomasson launches into more of a rock style, playing hard-edged, bluesier lines based on the same five-note scale. Across the first eight bars of this section, he plays four variations of what is essentially the same two-bar lick, with melodic deviations added along the way. In bar 16 of **FIGURE 6**, starting on the upbeat of beat two, he repeats a fast, beautifully articulated double-stop (two-note)



bending lick, using his ring finger to barre and bend the D and G strings at the seventh fret.

Occasionally, you will see that Thomasson tosses in the C note, especially when soloing over the C chord. Adding this note to the E minor pentatonic scale creates an E minor *hexatonic* (six-tone) scale, spelled E G A B C D. This unusual scale is very similar to the seven-tone E Aeolian mode, spelled E F♯ G A B C D. Another way to analyze this E minor hexatonic scale is to think of it in relation to the relative major scale, G major, which is spelled G A B C D E F♯. With G as the root, it becomes G major hexatonic (G A B C D E). (Dickey Betts uses this scale, in a variety of keys, to create sweet-sounding solos and harmonized melodies in such Allman Brothers Band classics as "Jessica," "Blue Sky," "Melissa" and "Ramblin' Man.")

In bars 19–23 of **FIGURE 6**, Thomasson plays cool licks with double-stops and lots of hammer-ons, pull-offs and slides. Listen closely to the recording to hear how these tricky licks should be articulated. In the last four bars of this section, the guitarist plays a beautifully melodic lick that incorporates a handful of two- and three-note chords. Thomasson uses this lick as a supporting rhythm part behind Billy Jones' subsequent guitar solo (3:23–4:22). Jones, while also basing much of his soloing on E minor pentatonic, plays the first six bars of his solo using notes from the E Dorian mode (E F♯ G A B C♯ D). Notice that this scale is almost identical to E Aeolian (E F♯ G A B C D), with the exception of the sixth scale degree.

In the four bars preceding the song's third verse (4:26–4:36), illustrated in **FIGURE 7**, Thomasson and Jones provide a brief burst of guitar harmony, played across the last two beats of bar 2. These notes are fourths apart, with Jones fretting an E and Thomasson fretting an A note a fourth above. The two guitarists create an interesting harmony, as Jones bends the E note up a minor third (one and a half steps) to G while Thomasson bends the A note up one whole step to B. The resultant pitches of the two bent notes, G and B, are a major third apart; so, while the harmony begins and ends in fourths, the interval between the two pitches contracts briefly from a perfect fourth (E-A) to a major third (G-B), then expands back to a perfect fourth as both bends are released.

Thomasson follows this harmonized bend with a fast, ascending E minor pentatonic run played in

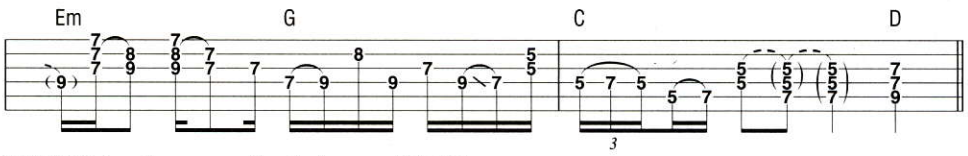


FIGURE 7 four bars preceding 3rd verse (4:26-4:36)

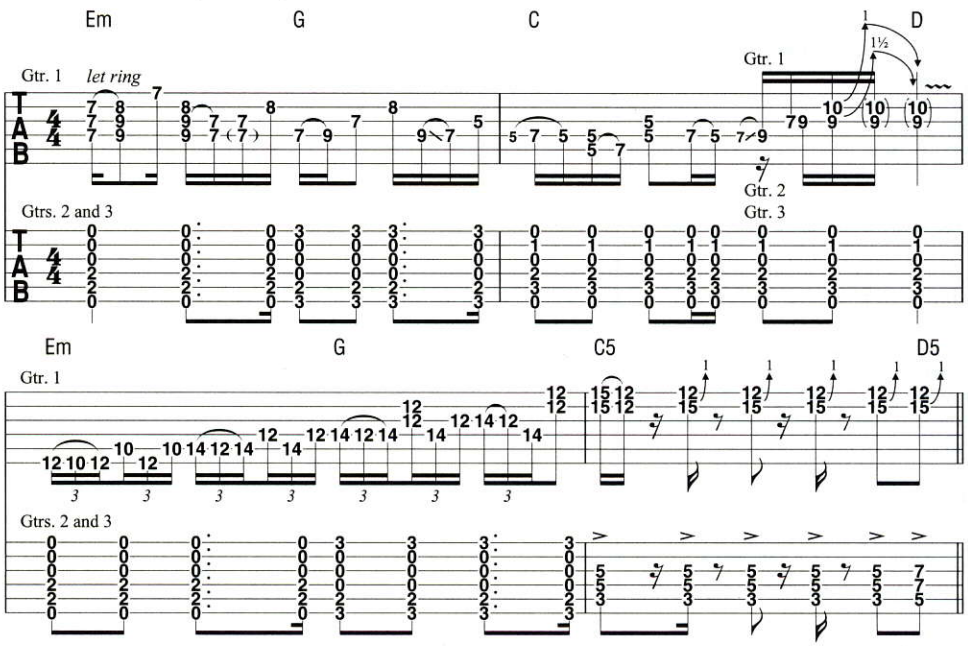
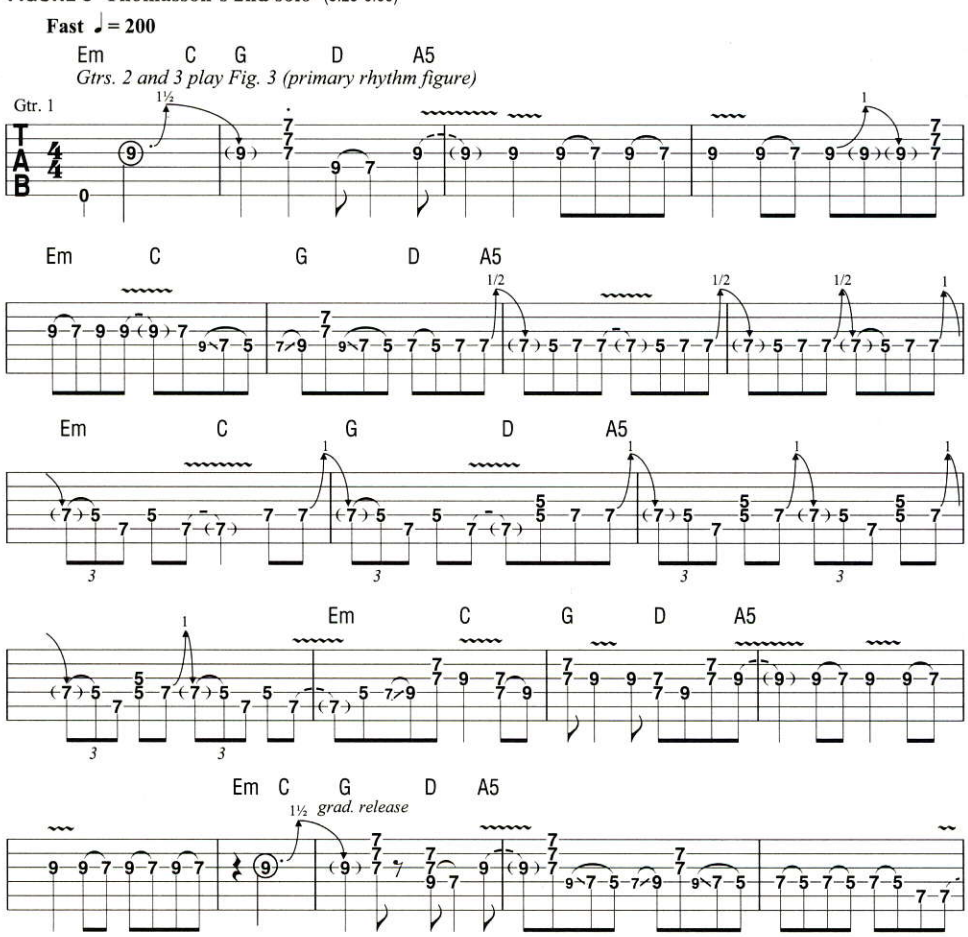


FIGURE 8 Thomasson's 2nd solo (5:25-6:00)



16th-note triplets. The section ends with the syncopated figure shown in bar 4 of **FIGURE 7**. At this point of the song (4:36), the guitars return to the parts illustrated in **FIGURES 4** and **5** for the third verse and chorus. At the end of the last chorus, the tempo kicks back into double time (200 bpm), and the rhythm guitar part shown in **FIGURE 3** is reprised. At 5:25, Thomasson launches into his second guitar solo, and it's a long one. At one minute and 27 seconds in length, it doesn't end until 6:52. **FIGURE 8** illustrates the first 32 bars of this guitar solo extravaganza (from 5:25–6:00). These licks are based primarily on E minor pentatonic, with brief inclusions of the ninth (F♯) and the minor (or "flat") sixth (C). Thomasson begins with a bold one-and-a-half-step bend, from E to G, in the first bar; he repeats this wide bend later in the solo, as does Jones in his second solo.

During this outro guitar solo, Thomasson recalls many of the catchy, improvised melodies from his first solo. Compare the two solos closely to see how he elaborates on these signature licks. When recreating these solo lines, strive for the same perfection in articulation Thomasson achieves. It will take a devoted effort to make these licks "speak" as clearly and powerfully as he does.

In the last part of Thomasson's solo section, he and the band add some arranged ensemble figures to keep things interesting. At 6:52, Thomasson plays a syncopated, octave-driven melodic phrase that is mimicked rhythmically by the rhythm guitars. At 7:00, he plays a dramatically repeating triplet figure that builds in a crescendo, from very quiet to very loud. This dynamic swell is also mimicked by the rest of the band.

The section culminates with a forceful ascending figure played by all three guitars. This eight-bar figure serves as the link between the guitar solos, as Thomasson effectively passes the solo torch to Jones, who starts his solo at 7:17. Jones solos for just about the exact length of time as Thomasson, one minute and 26 seconds, from 7:17–8:43. **FIGURE 9** depicts the first 40 bars of his solo (until 8:00). Jones begins with a series of reverse bends, in which the E note is pre-bent one whole-step up, to F♯, picked, and then released back to E. Consistent with much of the soloing heard in this tune, Jones turns this lick into a repeating motif and builds the first eight bars of his solo around it. Like his first solo, Jones' lines here are based primarily on E

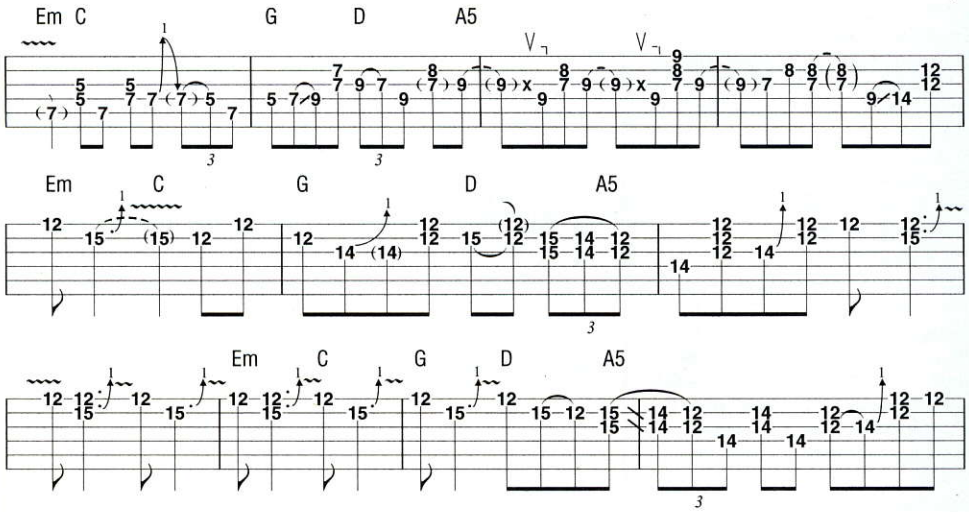
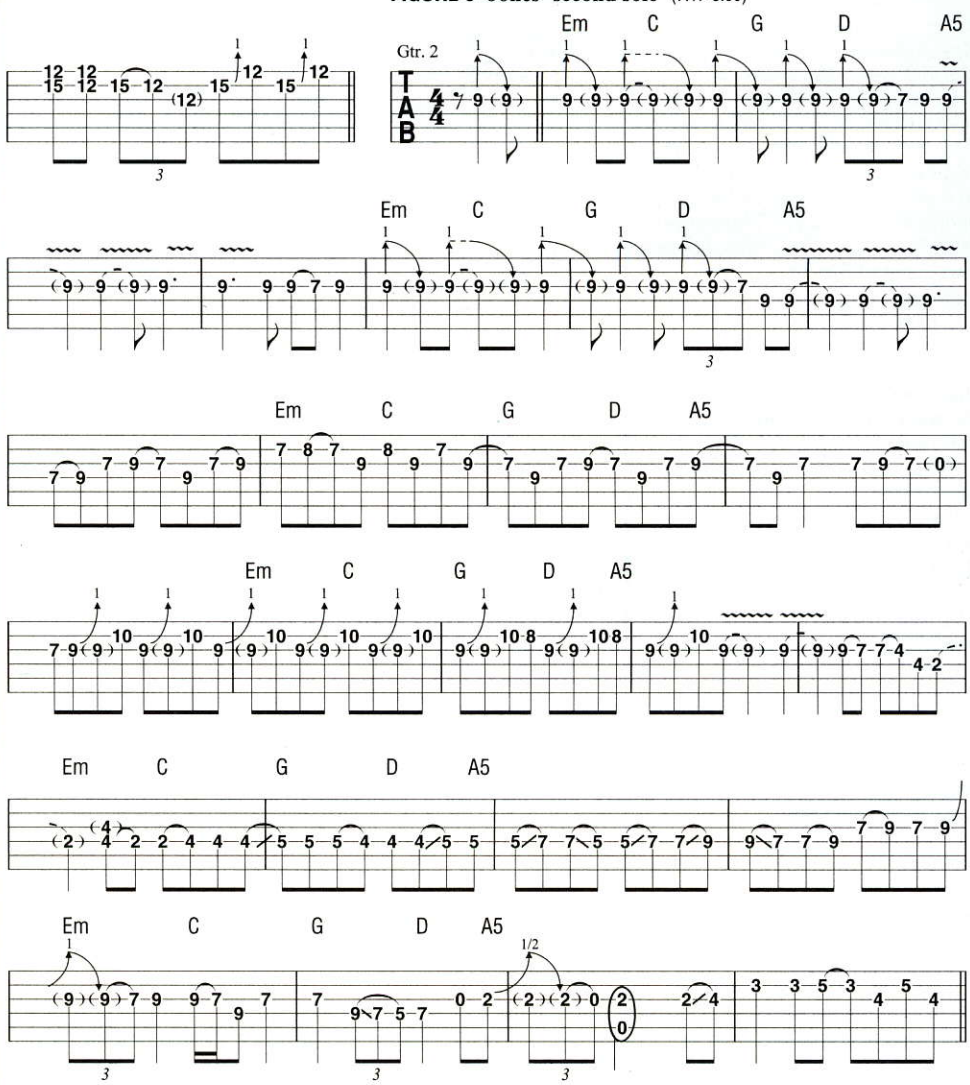


FIGURE 9 Jones' second solo (7:17-8:00)



minor pentatonic, with the inclusion of the ninth, F♯.

At bar 25 of **FIGURE 9** (at 7:43), Jones initiates a fast pull-off lick played on the B string. This lick is harmonized a third above by Henry Paul (Gtr. 3), who plays a similar lick on the high E string. Notice how, as the lick is repeated, Jones applies and removes a right-hand palm mute (P.M.), effectively changing the character of the lick.

At 8:43, Thomasson joins Jones for some spirited dual-guitar soloing, which was definitely the southern rock order of the day back in 1975. The two guitarists begin by doubling the fast E minor pentatonic lick depicted in **FIGURE 10**. This lick is harder to execute cleanly than one might imagine; approach it slowly at first and do your best to make each note as clear as possible. In the last bar of this example, you'll notice that Jones adds a brief high harmony line to Thomasson's part.

At 9:15, the boys lock into a blazing, repeating triplet lick played in harmony, with each triplet beginning a fourth apart and ending a third apart. This lick, shown in **FIGURE 11a**, is played eight times and is followed by the licks illustrated in **FIGURE 11b** (9:25–9:33). At this point, Jones moves his lick up to a high B (which is pulled off the G), followed by E, while Thomasson continues the same lick from **FIGURE 11a**. After playing this new harmony lick six times, Thomasson and Jones play a different harmonized lick in the same syncopated rhythm, setting up the final cadenza (9:34–9:43).

This cadenza, depicted in **FIGURE 12**, features Thomasson tearing through second-position licks based mostly on E minor pentatonic (he begins with a bit of E Aeolian). Notice in particular the beautiful "pinch," or "pick," harmonics (P.H.) Thomasson sounds as he repeatedly bends the A note (G string, second fret) up a whole step to B and back. His final touch is to toss in the G note, articulated as an F♯, pre-bent up one half-step, which he quickly unbends and then pulls off to an open low E. While Thomasson rips through this passage, Jones adds a unison high E bend, which he repeatedly picks and shakes.

As this masterpiece demonstrates, the Outlaws provided some of southern rock's most vital and exciting guitar wizardry. Sadly, Jones and bassist Frank O'Keefe passed away in 1995, and Thomasson died in September 2007. Check out the album *Best of the Outlaws: Green Grass & High Tides* to hear more guitar mastery from a band that was definitely one of the prime practitioners of southern rock.

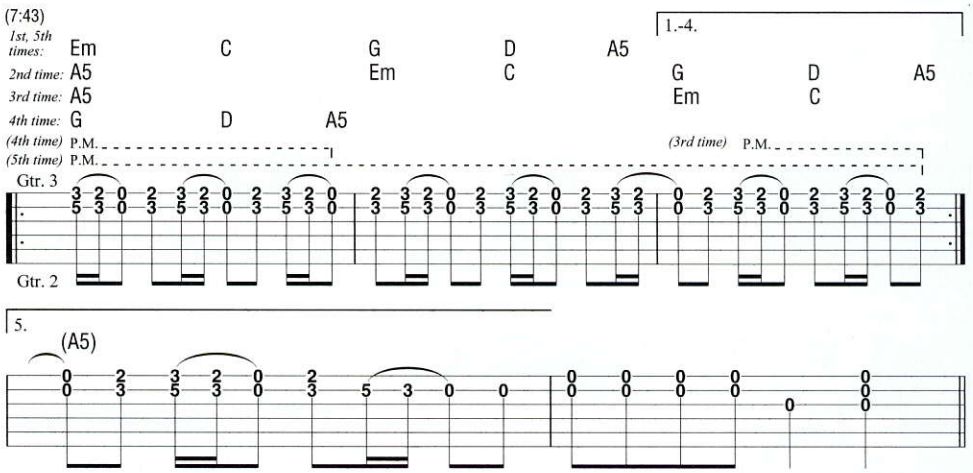


FIGURE 10 tandem lick (8:43-8:51)

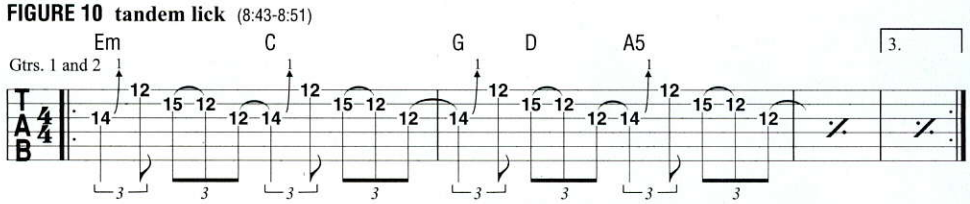
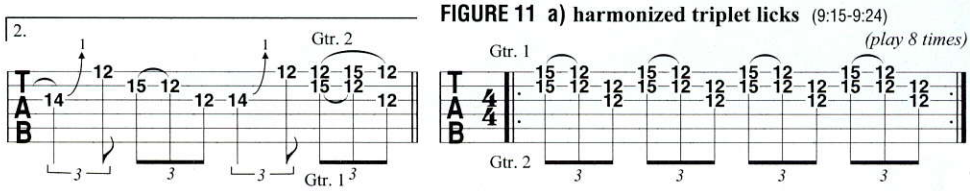


FIGURE 11 a) harmonized triplet licks (9:15-9:24)



b) (9:25-9:33)

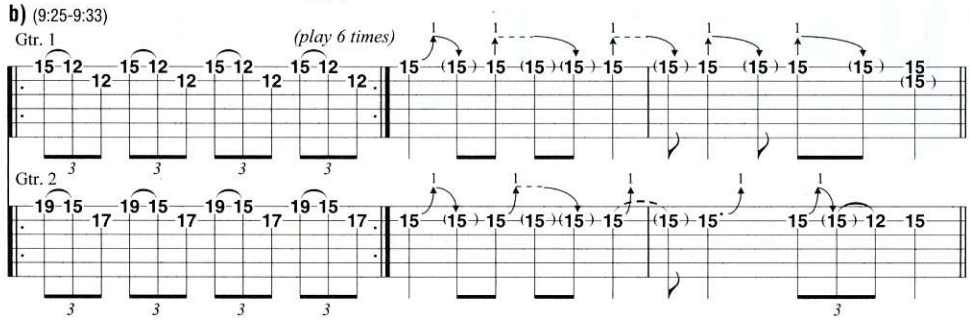
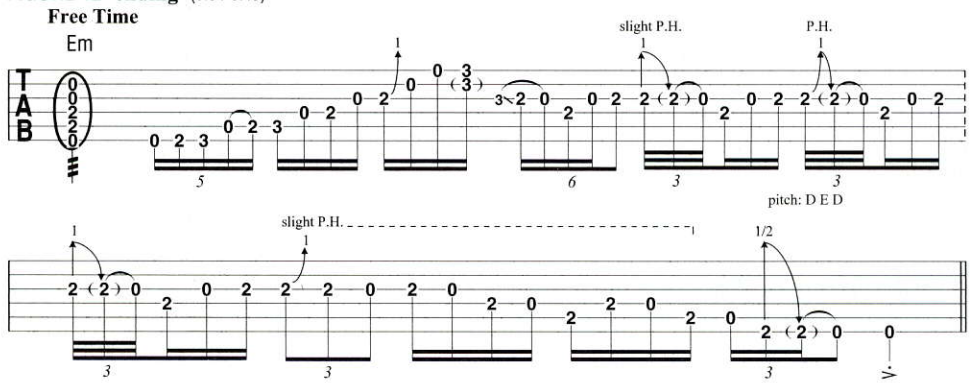
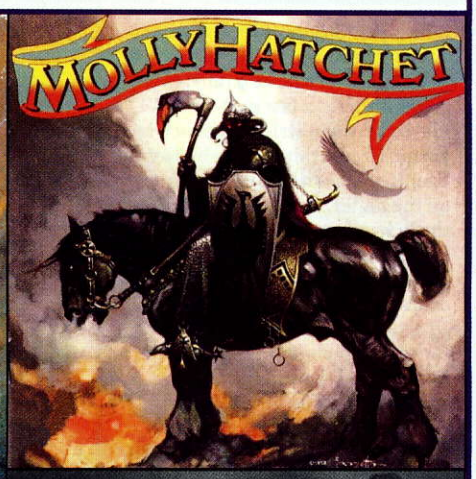
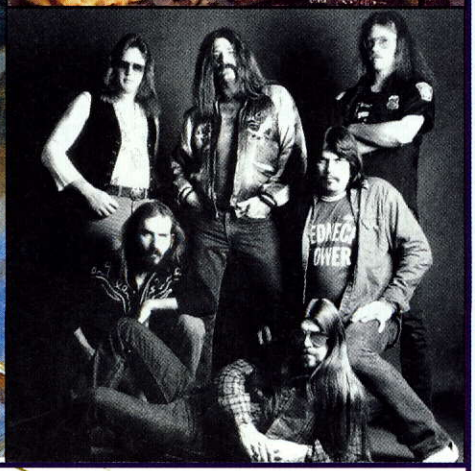


FIGURE 12 ending (9:34-9:43)







(clockwise from left) Frazetta's *Flirtin' with Disaster* cover; Hatchet's debut; the band in its prime

HATCHET JOB

"My husband's paintings made your band!"
–ARTIST FRANK FRAZETTA'S WIFE

By Geoff Barton

GUITAR 40 LEGENDS

ISSUE No. 106

The iconic—and slightly weird—artwork of MOLLY HATCHET's album sleeves.

THE TERM "SOUTHERN ROCK" conjures up a wealth of all-too-obvious visuals: cowboys, the Alamo, smokin' six-gun shoot-outs, the Confederate flag, and a dust-blown desert populated by cacti and tumbleweeds.

But here's one image you probably didn't expect would seep through the charcoal filter: that of a mad, rampaging, ax-wielding barbarian, less Billy the Kid, more Conan the Barbarian.

For Molly Hatchet's first, self-titled release in 1978, the Jacksonville, Florida, boogie band used famous fantasy artist Frank Frazetta as its album-cover illustrator. It proved to be an unusual but astute move.

Frazetta was expert at depicting broadsword-waving beast-men and scantily clad sorceresses, and his images somehow provided the perfect fit for Molly Hatchet's music. After all, Molly Hatchet are named after a 17th century prostitute dubbed "Hatchet Molly" who would decapitate her customers. (Apparently, it was a bad idea to ask for head.)

Molly Hatchet's first two albums—their debut and *Flirtin' with Disaster* (1979)—were very successful. The former sold a million copies; the latter was a Top-20 smash in America. Amazingly, Frazetta—or at least his wife—claimed credit for the band's success.

As Molly Hatchet guitarist Dave Hlubek recalled, "It was good working with Frank, but by the time we came to the cover of [*the group's third album*] *Beatin' the Odds*, the price had trebled. Frank's business manager was also his wife; I asked her why so much and she said: 'My husband's paintings made your band!'

"Well, we've never had a hit album cover played across the radio waves so we stopped doing business with her."

Having severed relations with Frazetta, Molly Hatchet contacted Peruvian artist Boris Vallejo to take over the reins for fourth album *Take No Prisoners*—and few fans noticed the join.

Hatchet's 1983 album, *No Guts No Glory*, featured a straightforward band photo, but it was a short-lived departure from the barbarous norm. "Yeah, Frank Frazetta did the first two," said guitarist Bobby Ingram. "Boris Vallejo did a couple of them, then Ezra Tucker did a couple. But Paul Raymond Gregory, out of Studio 54 in London, has been our artist for the last 10 years and is absolutely fantastic."

In addition to Molly Hatchet, Gregory has worked for Saxon, Dio, Uriah Heep and Blind Guardian. "Paul gets involved in the music, he gets involved with the concept of the album," adds Ingram. "The music, the songs, the feeling, the cover are all tied together."

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KICKIN' ASS

By Alan Paul

In the spring of 1998, Metallica's JAMES HETFIELD came face to face with his favorite power trio, GOV'T MULE.

AS RHYTHM GUITARIST and vocalist for Metallica, James Hetfield gives off a decidedly metal vibe. But look just beneath the surface and you start to see in him the influence of another strain of rebellious music: southern rock. Nowhere was this more evident than on *Garage Inc.*, Metallica's 1998 release of tributes, on which they covered the Lynyrd Skynyrd classic "Tuesday's Gone" and "Turn the Page," a Bob Seger song steeped in the southern-rock tradition that permeates that songwriter's rural Michigan roots.

So it was not too surprising to discover that Hetfield—as well as his coguitarist, Kirk Hammett, and Jason Newsted, Metallica's bass player from 1987 to 2001—was a huge fan of Gov't Mule, the southern rock–influenced power trio formed by guitarist Warren Haynes, bassist Allen Woody and drummer Matt Abts. In early 1998, when *Guitar World* asked Hetfield if he would like to sit down for a talk with Haynes and Woody, he jumped at the chance.

Entering the Manhattan photo studio where the interview took place, Hetfield smiled broadly when he spied Haynes' burly figure coming toward him. Putting down the guitar case he was carrying, Hetfield threw his arms around Haynes and patted the guitarist's broad back, exclaiming, "Good to see you, man!"

Across the room, Allen Woody set aside the doubleneck bass he'd been noodling on and came over to shake hands with Hetfield. Pumping Woody's hand, Hetfield said, "Man, Kirk and Jason were pissed when they heard I was coming down here to interview you guys. They both wanted to come along. They couldn't believe that I got to hang with Gov't Mule and they didn't."

At the time of the meeting, Gov't Mule had just released *Dose* (Capricorn), the trio's second studio album, a stunning achievement on which Haynes fulfilled all the guitar hero promise he displayed as a member of the Allman Brothers Band from 1989 through '97. "Warren plays so much cool stuff without ever sounding like he's showing off," Hetfield marvelled. "It all fits in, and it all makes perfect sense."

Haynes' playing with the Mule has always sounded in sync, largely because he engages in three-way musical conversations with his playing partners. "I constantly change directions in the middle of a solo because of something Matt or Woody plays," Haynes acknowledged at our interview. "They are definitely not just playing repetitive patterns while I solo. It's really pure, true group improvisation."

Haynes and Woody first developed their rapport as members of the Allman Brothers Band, the great group they helped to revive in '89. The duo formed Gov't Mule with Abts in

Photos by Danny Clinch

1993, and a year later they played their first formal show. The trio performed about 80 gigs in between Allman Brothers tours before releasing its self-titled 1995 debut on Relativity Records. In 1997, Haynes and Woody left the Allmans to concentrate on the Mule. Unfortunately, the lineup would not last long: Woody died unexpectedly in August 2000.

In the years between their debut and *Dose*, Gov't Mule's sound deepened, expanding in almost every direction—becoming both bluesier and heavier, more expansive and tighter. *Dose* was a bold and adventurous powerhouse of a guitar record—from the proto-metal minor-key riff of "Game Face" and the Miles Davis tribute "Birth of the Mule" to the psychedelic freakout coda tagged onto the Beatles' "She Said, She Said" and the acoustic, Zeppelin-inspired "Raven Black Night."

"There's a lot of range in their music," Hetfield observed. "But it always seems appropriate, and it always sounds fuckin' cool."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

GUITAR WORLD James, how did you first hear the Mule?

JAMES HETFIELD We had an accountant named Kenny Silva on the road with us, who had been working with the Allman Brothers. He gave me a tape and said, "I think you'll like this. It's serious guitar music with a heavy southern rock vibe." I threw it in the machine, and I just fell in love with it. Kirk got wind of it around the same time and also fell in love. It just hit us right away.

GW What attracted you so strongly?

HETFIELD I'm not generally a big solo guy, because I'm not into showing off that way. But this stuff fit exactly with the music, and it just sounded like stuff I'd want to hear and play. If I was playing lead, that's how I'd like to play—but I can't. That thought struck me right away. So in a way, I feel like Warren's playing is the expression of my solo voice.

And then you've got a kick-ass bass player playing chords—which is incredibly cool but is not allowed in our band. [*laughs*] We're like, "Jason, keep one finger right here and play."

GW So you and Kirk enjoy Gov't Mule together, but conspire to make sure Jason never hears them?

HETFIELD [*laughs*] Exactly.

ALLEN WOODY That's a good idea, James. I can give a guy a lot of bad habits if you're not careful. I tend to think I'm Leslie West with a bass.

GW Warren, what did you guys think when you heard that the guys in Metallica were fans?

HETFIELD [*laughs*] He thought, Metalli-who?

WARREN HAYNES I know where Metallica is coming from, and I don't think them liking us is as strange as it may seem to some people. First of all, our stuff is a little heavier than most people probably think. I don't classify it as hard rock, but everything we do definitely has a hard edge, and I think there are a lot of Metallica fans who would be Gov't Mule fans if they checked us out, though they don't know it. We're definitely not just for Allman Brothers fans.

GW James, do you think most Metallica fans would like the Mule?

HETFIELD I think so. Without waving the guitar flag too high, there are a lot of guitar fans who like Metallica because there's a lot of crunching going on and a lot of guitars in your face. And I think the people who are attracted to Metallica for that reason will definitely dig Gov't Mule—I mean, talk about guitar in your face. This is it, man.

GW James, you've said in the past that you really dig Lynyrd Skynyrd, but never really got into the Allmans.

HETFIELD Yeah, that's true. Actually, I went back and listened to a lot of the Allmans catalog to get ready for this, and I thought that a lot of it was very stiff. It is very jamming on the surface, but there are many things which can't really let go because you've got two guitarists and two drummers and a keyboardist. It will sort of go off on a jam for a while, but it doesn't just go crazy like some of the stuff in the Mule, which I love. Plus, of course, the Mule definitely has a rockier edge; everyone's covering a lot more ground rather than just playing their parts, and it is a lot more loose. Being a three-piece, it has to be.

HAYNES Right. Because I'm the only chord, it's easy to

just take off. I think the less people you have in a band, the easier it is to take off for uncharted territory. Because if you have three chordal instruments, the others have to either lay out or listen really, really closely to what one guy's doing.

WOODY Obviously, it's a lot more dangerous to turn seven guys loose than it is three. With the Allman Brothers, you could get into trouble real fast if you go outside of the parameters, because of the two drummers and seven guys bubbling under everything. But with three guys, who's to say it's a mistake? If you can react, go for it. There are some really good moments on our records which were, in fact, mistakes.

HETFIELD Just play 'em twice, and they won't be mistakes. That's cool. There is definitely some crazy stuff going on in the new album. For instance, on "Thorazine Shuffle," your drummer just goes fucking nuts at the end. Who's holding the beat?

WOODY We are.

HETFIELD Wow. That must have been pretty damn hard to play along with.

HAYNES Yeah. Woody and I are laying the beat and Matt's soloing across it. I think it's very cool for the drummer to be set free from having to worry about holding down the beat every once in a while, though it's a little constricting to us.

WOODY When we recorded "Thorazine Shuffle," we were all within five feet of each other, with our amps off in some other room. That's something we've always done—you really have to if you want it to be loose and flow. Your last few albums sound like you guys are heading in that direction, so I was wondering if you've ever recorded that way?

HETFIELD We're trying to do that sort of thing, but five feet is a little close for us. [*laughs*] We don't want to be within choking distance. We do the drum tracks first and we're all there for that, which is new for us. But when it comes time to do overdubs, it's like, "Get the fuck out of here. I'm letting loose." It works better that way because, for instance, if I'm there when Kirk is doing his rhythm stuff, he's already nervous doing stuff he hasn't done before, so the last thing he needs is me glaring over his shoulder. It's really better if I'm not there. Then, when I hear it, it's like, "Grrrr...I guess I can live with that." But it's cool, it's pure, it's him. You guys, on the other hand, do almost everything live—and point out whatever isn't in the liner notes, which is pretty awesome.

HAYNES Yeah, we like to point out where the overdubs are. Since I'm the only guitarist, the rhythm guitar drops out during solos. We usually don't change that, but when you do hear a second guitar, we overdubbed the rhythm part, because all the solos are live.

HETFIELD Wow! That's awesome. So you don't overdub the solos—which is backward from the way most people approach it. Your overdubs are just for filling in, so it's really not cheating from the live approach.

HAYNES Right. On the new album, the only solo we overdubbed was "Larger Than Life," because that's a new song and we'd never played it live. So I put the rhythm down and went back to the solo. But our main goal is to get the jamming feel on tape, which is why I play the solos live and overdub the rhythm as necessary. It's a very old-school way of doing things, and something we have to do in order to get the three-piece vibe we want. If I didn't play a solo live, Allen and Matt would be guessing what to play, because we really do play off each other.

GW Do you carry that live approach all the way to effects?

HAYNES Yeah. I'm stepping on the pedals as I solo. The only time I remember running a [*recorded*] signal back through an effect was the wah wah on "Blind Man in the Dark." I didn't play it live because I'm just not a good wah wah player. I've never been really into it. I heard it for that song, but if I tried to play it live, it probably would have taken us 20 takes to get it right—and we never do 20 takes.

GW Though you did seem to utilize the studio more this time.

HAYNES Yeah, we really wanted to take advantage of it.

> **"I picked up a lot of the fast right-hand technique from punk, which made me sort of an outsider, and which was probably the best thing that ever happened to me."**
>
> –JAMES HETFIELD

For instance, on "Blind Man" we panned the bass off to the right, with the dirty vocal up the middle and the guitars off to the left; the drums are stereo. In pre-production, we talked about wanting to find one song where we could pan all the guitar to one side and all the bass to the other side like they used to do. It's a really old-school mix.

WOODY If you listen to some Cream or Beatles records, you have the bass and vocals on one side, and the guitars and drums on the other.

HETFIELD That's sort of what we tried to do on our last couple of records—just have the guitars completely split. Kirk's in the right speaker and I'm in the left. Just make it real simple if anyone wants to know who's playing what.

HAYNES That's a really cool thing to do in a two-guitar format. We did that in the Allman Brothers a bit. I wish we had done it more because the old Allman Brothers were always Dickey on one side and Duane on the other. When you have two guitar players playing all the time it's very cool, but when you have one guitar coming in and out, as we do now, you have to pick your spot.

GW Listening to *Dose*, it really is clear that there's only one guitar. James, I believe you tend to like dual-guitar bands. Is it new for you to be so into a one-guitar setup?

HETFIELD Not totally; I've always liked Rush, for instance. But it is true that in the early days, metal generally meant two guitars. In bands like the Scorpions, UFO and Judas Priest, you had the rhythm guy and then the guy who did the solos. Those were their duties and it was clear cut, so that's how we always did it, too. But as time went on, I started thinking, Why does it have to be so strict? I love playing melodies, so I started saying, "Okay, Kirk, you play some rhythm and I'll just fuck around here." And it's been a lot of fun.

HAYNES More slow, melodic guitar parts are popping up in your stuff. Is that you?

HETFIELD Yeah. I love playing the melodic stuff. I love adding textures and colors, and we've mixed it all up now, with Kirk doing more rhythms and me doing more leads.

GW Warren, the thing that always trips me out at your shows is seeing hippie kids, whose knowledge of music starts with the Grateful Dead and ends with Phish, dancing away to a Black Sabbath groove. It amazes me that they respond to music much heavier than what they're used to.

HAYNES I think that kids today are much more open-

minded. It's okay to mix genres, whereas in the old days you couldn't do that. I did, and Woody did—musicians did—but the general public tended to like one style of music. It was like, "I'm a rocker, I don't listen to country music," or "I'm a blues guy and rock sucks," or "I'm into jazz and Eddie Van Halen sucks."

WOODY It was like a class war.

HETFIELD Exactly. You were either in or out, and it was hard to go halfway. Like, I liked metal and punk, so I wasn't accepted by either group.

HAYNES But it's not like that anymore. Kids pick and choose what they like, and part of what makes Gov't Mule work is we run the whole gamut from really heavy to really soft. In a trio, you have to have the dynamics. There are really soft and delicate moments and really loud and obtrusive moments, and everything in between. Because dynamics is our fourth member.

HETFIELD *Ooooh.* Deep. [*laughs*]

WOODY He's got lots of little sayings like that written down on scraps of paper in his pockets.

HAYNES Yeah, crib notes. [*laughs*] The good thing about having a bigger band is all the different sounds and textures and layers it allows you to do. In a trio, you don't have that option. That's why I use more effects than I would in a larger band, and it's also why we really exaggerate the dynamics.

HETFIELD Yeah. In a lot of your songs, you'll go from an intensely loud and heavy chorus or bridge to a very mellow verse, and it's like, "Wait a minute, how did they get here? I didn't notice how they arrived here!" It seems so natural, and that's the thing that impresses me so much about your song structures. It always seems really hard for us to pull that off; the switches tend to seem too obtrusive and obvious.

HAYNES Thanks. The chemistry between the three of us has been great from the get-go, which is really crucial to pulling that off, but it's also something we've discussed at depth: ways to vary things and react to each other and adapt to make a full, rich sound with just the three of us. If Woody and Matt played the way they do in a larger band, we would sound empty. The beauty is they just beat and bang to death, but it's all perfectly tasteful and fitting.

WOODY I have a sneaking suspicion, however, that Matt and I would play exactly like this in a larger band.

HETFIELD [*laughs*] Yeah, man, but now it's okay. Now you're let loose! You're free of the rhythm section cage. That must be awesome.

WOODY Yeah, it's a real treat, especially coming from where I was. I played in the Allman Brothers for eight years and loved it. But then the first time I played with Matt, I thought, "This is it. This is the guy I'm supposed to play with." It's a rare opportunity all the way around: to be able to play in a three-piece, to be able to play busy, and to be able to play with people who really know what they're doing and dig what you're doing. And it's also been very exciting to see so much progress. If you listen to the first record and *Dose* back to back, I think the growth is tremendous.

HETFIELD "Game Face" has a killer, extra-heavy, minor riff. Its heaviness really stood out to me. It's even something that we would do. Actually, it reminds me of early UFO.

HAYNES Hmmm. They were a good band, but I don't think I've been influenced by them at all. I was, however, a big Deep Purple and Ritchie Blackmore fan, and a lot of my attraction to the harmonic minor carries over from those days. I don't remember exactly where that riff came from, but it's definitely pretty dark. I love minor keys, and it's a lot easier to be heavier in them than in a major.

HETFIELD Oh, yes. We know all about that. Major is too happy for us.

HAYNES Although I have noticed that you guys have started trying some songs with major thirds, which is cool. It's good to go somewhere different once in a while.

HETFIELD Yeah, but for us, that means the lyrics have to be extra-heavy to balance it out. [*laughs*] Warren, your solos always seem so well-formed. Are they written out?

HAYNES No. All the solos are pretty much improvised. I usually would play it completely differently each time, then we'd decide which one we liked. Once we pick one and record it, I generally learn it and try to base my performances around it, or else the song will just seem wrong to people.

HETFIELD Lately, Kirk has been trying to come up with solos more like that. He'll noodle along while we record basic tracks, trying out different ideas, and by the time he's ready to record, he has a pretty good idea of what will work. Jason does a similar thing, trying out different basses, so he ends up with all these awesome sounds that always fit right into the song. It's sort of a new thing for us, because in the past it was always just Lars and I slugging it out during basic tracks: "That sucks! Do it over." Back and forth, back and forth. I was the only one there with Lars, stuck in hell forever. Now everyone goes with me, so it's less of a hell. It kind of intimidates Lars into doing his homework more and playing a little better. That process has made the studio a lot more fun for us.

GW How many takes do you guys do to get these live performances?

HAYNES It depends. Sometimes we do quite a few, but we usually use early ones, the first two or three takes.

HETFIELD Wow!

WOODY But we will not play anything 15 times in a row—we'll just move on and come back. Our producer, Michael Barbiero [*Soundgarden, Blues Traveler*], is pretty good at not letting us bang our heads against the wall.

HAYNES He sees the magic dripping out after three or four takes and comes up with some excuse for us to break.

HETFIELD Warren, do you feel the need to perfect your parts or do you just see what comes about through jamming?

HAYNES It's more about improv. I don't make myself sit down with a tape recorder and write riffs as much as I should. Instead, I wait for cool moments to happen when we're jamming or to get lyrically inspired and suddenly think, I need a riff for this song. Part of it is laziness and part is just my love for improv. I'm more interested in where the jamming will lead us than in seeing what I can figure out in my living room.

HETFIELD Do singing and playing ever clash for you? Does one suffer because of the other live?

HAYNES Yeah. I have to play a little less rhythm guitar than I would like. The guitar drops out more than I'd like it to, and that always bugs me when I listen to live tapes. At least I have the option of dropping out. I don't see how bass players like Jack Bruce, Sting or Geddy Lee manage to pull it off.

HETFIELD Do you also keep scratch vocals?

HAYNES I end up keeping the live vocals for three or four songs on an album, and usually it's the more bluesy songs. The ones that are harder to play, I just play the guitar and then go back and do the vocals. I'm getting better at singing and playing at the same time, but it's tough.

GW James, do you guys listen back to your tapes to see what's working, the way the Mule does?

HETFIELD Never. I do not listen to them ever. Lars keeps tapes. He's got the collection from hell, a room filled with set lists from 1981. He keeps everything, but he doesn't listen to it and I definitely do not. What happened happened, and to get in fights over "the tempo of that song really sucked" seems pointless. We'd rather keep moving forward.

HAYNES You'd rather fight by memory. "The tempo on that song sucked but I'm not going to prove it." [*laughs*] Matt will sometimes play a song faster than normal one night and slower than normal the next night, but he's doing it on purpose, to see if he likes it better.

WOODY He doesn't really care whether or not we like it better.

HETFIELD [*laughs*] That's fine, though. The problem with us is Lars just doesn't know where he is on a song, and we're going, "Dude, we can't play that riff that fast!"

HAYNES Although it seems like on *Load* and *Reload* you guys pulled the tempos back.

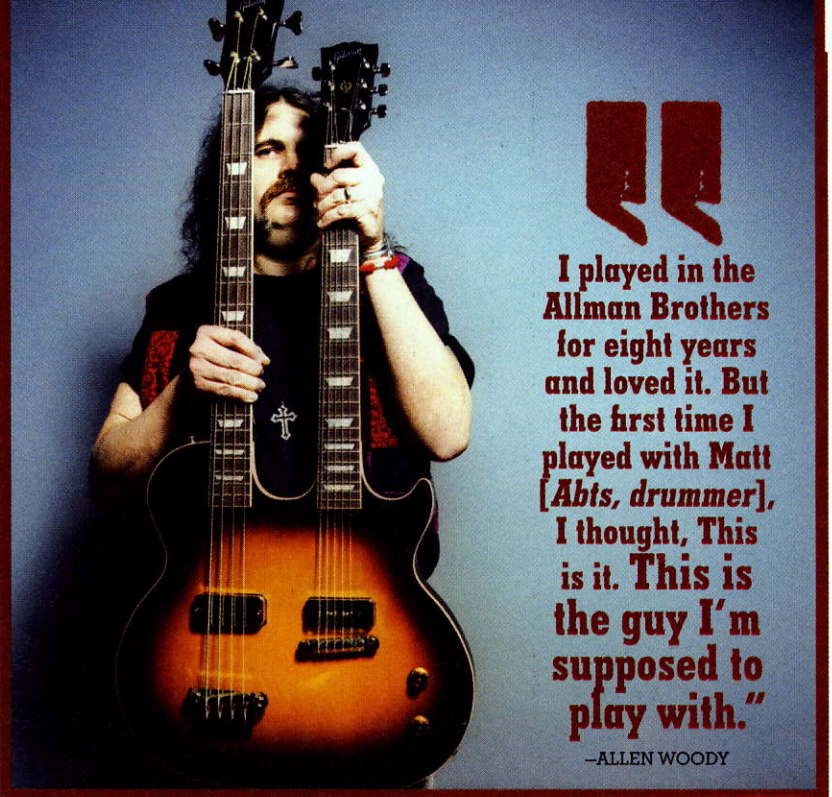
HETFIELD Yeah, we did. Lars likes to hit the snare way back.

GW Warren, you are using that simulated Leslie sound more and more. What is that?

HAYNES It's a Korg G4. It helps break up the monotony of one Les Paul guitar playing all night. I even used it in the studio rather than a real Leslie because it doesn't alter the sound of your guitar; it's like your tone with a Leslie sound. Whereas if you play through a real Leslie, you have to start over and build your sound from its sound. I run it stereo in the studio and mono live. I'm also using an octave divider and a tremolo unit, as well as a few other things. While we love the three-piece format, we have to have ways to alter the sound. So Woody used a Rickenbacker and a Thunderbird on the album, and I'm always looking for new effects.

HETFIELD Do you still use Soldano heads?

HAYNES Yes. For the Leslie I use two Soldano heads run stereo, but on the new record I mostly used my '68 Marshall Plexi and my Diaz CD-100 head which Cesar built me. Often, we ran three or four heads together, then blended them and saw what we liked.



"I played in the Allman Brothers for eight years and loved it. But the first time I played with Matt [*Abts, drummer*], I thought, This is it. This is the guy I'm supposed to play with."

–ALLEN WOODY

WOODY Working with Michael Barbiero, you never really know what you're playing through. He'd constantly be going back into the iso booths and playing around. I had an SVT and a 120-watt Orange stack with two 4x12s and a 200-watt Marshall head.

HETFIELD Warren, you play several Les Pauls. Do you have a favorite?

HAYNES Yes, a Custom Shop built in '89. It's not the best-sounding, but it's the most comfortable and I can really make it work for me. I also have a semi-hollowbody that has no f-holes, which I like a lot. And I have a fat-neck Les Paul which sounds great but you just can't play as dexterously on. I pull it out for some rhythm parts, or for songs where I don't have to play real fast.

I also played Woody's Firebird on three songs, including "Larger Than Life" and "I Shall Return," and got hooked on it, so I asked Gibson to make me one. I like it, but I'm just getting used to how top-heavy it is.

HETFIELD Warren, are you schooled?

HAYNES Not really. I took three or four lessons from a guy back in North Carolina. He was unschooled himself, but he was my favorite player in my home area. After a few lessons he said, "Why don't you just teach yourself? That's what I did, and what all of my favorite players did."

HETFIELD I guess he didn't make too much money as a teacher.

WOODY Nope. The thing is, by the time you get the urge to want a lesson, you probably don't need them.

HETFIELD Yeah, you've already learned bad habits. I learned from slowing down UFO albums and figuring the solos out. Just by listening to music and figuring out what notes should be played. Man, I even learned by looking at live posters and seeing where their fingers were and thinking, Well, that's something. I never took any lessons at all. I picked up a lot of the fast right-hand technique from punk, which made me sort of an outsider, and which was probably the best thing that ever happened to me. I developed my own bag, but it was a natural thing for me. It wasn't like, "I'm going to find the next hot thing."

HAYNES It's good to listen to lots of different stuff, just whatever you like. The first two records I ever bought were Alice Cooper's *Killer* and Jethro Tull's *Aqualung*. That's two weird records to begin with, but I think they hold up well.

HETFIELD Definitely. *Aqualung* is one that my brother turned me on to. It wasn't that hard rocking, but Martin Barre had a really good sound. He knew what he was doing.

HAYNES There was so much good and different music back then—you'd just keep moving through it and discovering more new stuff. I went through my Black Sabbath phase before I even started playing guitar. Once I got into playing, it was Cream and Hendrix. Then it was Johnny Winter and the Allman Brothers, then Santana and Billy Gibbons and David Gilmour and Steve Howe of Yes. It was all different, but I loved it all.

WOODY The common thread was all those guys could really play. That was a unique period for popular music...

HETFIELD ...where people could actually play their instruments. [*laughs*]

WOODY Yeah, seriously. Where the people who rose to the top could play. Where, by proxy, if your band had superior musical ability you were going to go somewhere.

HETFIELD Instead of just having a cool haircut. Like us. [*laughs*]

(from left) Greg T. Walker, Charlie Hargrett, Rickey Medlocke, Jakson Spires and Ken Hensley

NO RESERVATIONS

By Ken McIntyre

The hard-luck story of BLACKFOOT, southern rock's great unsung heroes.

IT'S THE SUMMER OF 1970. In a tiny, sweltering, fourth-floor apartment in Manhattan, just around the corner from the Fillmore East, a teenage rock band from Florida, armed to the teeth with guns, grit and guitars, sleeps seven to a room and dreams big dreams. Bass player Greg T. Walker is there. In fact, the whole thing was his idea.

"The third day we were staying there, someone broke into our van and took about half of our equipment," he recalls today. "We still managed to get a few dates, though. We'd get paid $150 or $200, and we'd buy a sack of potatoes or some cereal. We'd eat one baloney sandwich a day. I remember one time putting water on Cheerios. This lasted through the following year. There were some very lean times. But we were young, we had a choice. We decided to stick it out."

Nearly 40 years later, after eight albums, countless world tours and many personal tragedies, Blackfoot are still sticking it out, and proudly.

The band began in late 1969 as Fresh Garbage and soon after changed its name to Hammer. The music was loud, gangly garage rock inspired by the Zombies and by Spirit, whose song "Fresh-Garbage" inspired the group's first name. Most of the band members were childhood friends who grew up together in Jacksonville, Florida. They were young and brash and played with unparalleled ferocity, which earned them an early, life-changing break.

"We were playing New Years' Eve here in Gainesville," says guitarist and founding member Charlie Hargrett, "and this girl here that we knew had gotten this job in Manhattan working at a production company in the Brill Building. [*The Brill Building was a center for music writing and publishing from the Thirties through the Sixties.*] So she had a job up there and came home for the holidays and saw us. A couple weeks later we get a letter from New York. It says, 'Hey, my boss wants a tape,' so we put a demo together,

CAB ARCHIVES/REDFERNS/RETNA

No Reservations (below), "the ugliest cover you've ever seen," says Greg Walker

and she said, 'C'mon up. You can stay in my apartment.' So we did."

And so began the lean months of potatoes and watered-down Cheerios. "We didn't think we were paying dues, but we were," Hargrett says with a laugh. "We were broke."

Several things happened in quick succession then. For one, most of the band got arrested for firearms possession. "When we first showed up in New York, we had guns on the dashboard of the car," Walker says, with a shrug. "We had no idea. We're from Florida, man."

Then the band discovered another group was using the name Hammer. "We needed a new name quick," Hargrett says. "Since we were moving up north to start a big recording career, we thought, Okay, we'll call it 'Free,' because we're free now. And then 'All Right Now' [*the 1970 hit song by the English band Free*] came out, and we were like, 'Shit.' So Jakson came up with Blackfoot, because of his Native American heritage."

Both drummer Jakson "Thunderfoot" Spires and Greg T. Walker were Native Americans, so the name seemed appropriate. However, neither is a Blackfoot Indian. "Jakson was Cheyenne, Cherokee and French," Walker says. "He always said he got his creativity from the first two, and blamed his faults on the French. I'm Muskogee Creek. Nobody was Blackfoot, but it was a nice bold-sounding name."

With a new name and a working knowledge of the New York justice system, Blackfoot moved to the Jersey shore to plot their next move. And then they promptly broke up.

"This place we ended up in was a real shithole," Hargrett remembers. "There wasn't really a club scene up there either, so we were surviving by playing frat gigs and high schools. When that stuff closed up for the summer, we were out of work."

Blackfoot frontman Rickey Medlocke was asked to drum for Lynyrd Skynyrd. He accepted, and left the band. Not soon after, Walker joined Skynyrd as well. The remainder of the band ended up in North Carolina, where they joined up with a mysterious figure named Lenny Stadler, who had a band called Blackberry Smoke. But then Stadler got sick, found God and denounced rock and roll.

Recalls Hargrett, "By that time Rickey was back in the band, and then Greg came back, too. We got back together and moved to New Jersey, our old stomping grounds. By then there was a club scene and there were places to play, and we could survive the year. Rickey had some connections at Muscle Shoals studio in Alabama because of Skynyrd, so we went down there and recorded an album on spec. They sold it to Island Records."

In 1975, Blackfoot's first album, the cleverly titled *No Reservations*, was released. Its cover was a conical, pop-art nightmare more suited for Kraftwerk than a no-nonsense southern heavy metal band. Not surprisingly, it sank like a stone.

"It had the ugliest cover you've ever seen," Walker says. "I believe it actually won an award for the guy who designed it. Then, in 1976, we switched to Epic Records and released *Flying High*. It did a little better, but not enough to make a difference nationally."

Both records were buried by more commercially successful albums issued by their respective labels, including Boston's smash-selling Epic debut. Despite their flagging recording career, the band continued to prove their mettle onstage. "The first two records didn't sell," Hargrett explains. "But they got us going enough to be playing with other bands across the country."

The band took the opportunity to hone its chops, particularly its relentless twin-guitar attack. By the late Seventies, Blackfoot became the most terrifying underachievers in rock and roll.

"Early on, we were opening for a lot of bands like Mountain, Rick Derringer, Edgar Winter, people like that," Walker says. "So we got a lot of exposure and a taste of playing on big stages, full-on concerts with eight to 10 thousand people every night."

"We always played like we were the headliners," Hargrett adds.

Blackfoot's big break finally came in 1978. The band was playing a string of southwestern dates with Brownsville Station when Brownsville's frontman and perennial rock-booster, Club Coda, introduced them to his management company. They soon signed on with Atco Records and released *Strikes* in 1979. It was their first Gold record, and the hustle was on.

"*Strikes* went Gold real fast," Walker says. "They were calling us an overnight success and we were saying, 'Yeah, right—a 10-year overnight success!' "

The band spent the next five years on the road, taking breaks only to record new albums or brawl with their touring-mates, as they did when on the road with Blue Öyster Cult. "We just didn't hit it off with them," Walker says. "We had, like, 30 dates booked, and there was already friction the first night of the tour. The second night was a little worse, and the third night we came to blows. I didn't even know what the problem was. We were just playing our hearts out, and maybe they resented it."

In addition to BÖC, the band toured with Kiss, UFO, AC/DC and Black Oak Arkansas. "In 1979, we were travelling in a van," Walker says. "By 1980, and we had two buses, two tractor trailers, 22 guys on the crew. It just never stopped. We went 22 months without a break. But we didn't really want one. We loved it."

In 1983, Blackfoot released *Siogo*, their first album with former Uriah Heep keyboard player Ken Hensley. Despite the minor success of lead-off single "Teenage Idol," the lighter, more commercial sound of the album turned off many long-time Blackfoot fans. The band managed to squeeze out one more album, 1984's dismally selling *Vertical Smiles*, before finally collapsing from exhaustion and record company pressure. Despite a pact to fully dissolve the band, Rickey Medlocke continued to use the Blackfoot name for another decade, although none of the other members were involved. Later on, Medlocke rejoined Lynyrd Skynyrd as a guitarist. Walker, Spires and Hargrett played with the Southern Rock All-Stars over the years, but Walker had always hoped the band would someday rise from the ashes. And in 2004, it did.

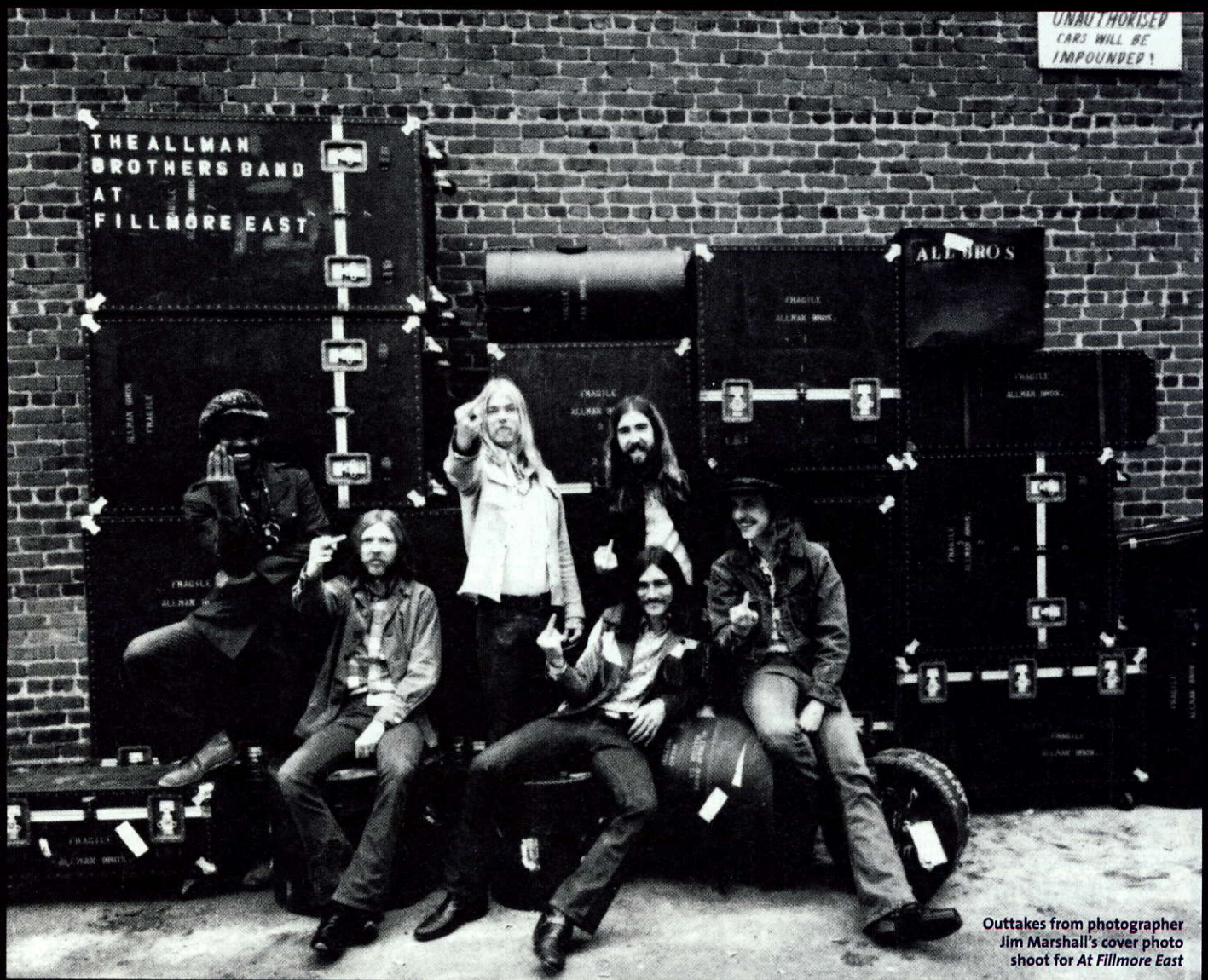
"I was out on the road with Pat Travers," he recalls, "And I thought, Damn, I just want Blackfoot back. So I called Charlie, and I called Jak. Charlie called Ricky too, and he said he was happy with Skynyrd and that he didn't want anything to do with it. But we had three of the four, and that felt good."

Blackfoot began playing shows again to resounding success, but in March 2005, tragedy struck when Jakson Spires died suddenly of an aneurysm. "It still hurts to this day, and will probably hurt for the rest of my life," Walker says. "We spent a lifetime together. He was truly a brother."

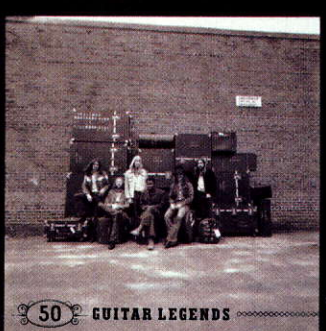
Still, Walker and Hargrett believe Spires would have wanted them to carry on. And so Blackfoot survive. They have a new live DVD out; they're touring all summer and even recorded some new songs. The story is far from over.

"I feel privileged to still be doing this," Walker says. "I mean that with all my heart. It's who I am and what I am. It's all of us."

NEIL ZLOZOWER



Outtakes from photographer Jim Marshall's cover photo shoot for *At Fillmore East*



At FILLMORE EAST

By Alan Paul

GUITAR LEGENDS 51 ISSUE No. 106

In a retrospective look at their classic live album, DICKEY BETTS and GREGG ALLMAN recall the record that made the ALLMAN BROTHERS kings of the road.

IT TOOK A LOT OF BALLS FOR the Allman Brothers Band to release the double live *At Fillmore East* as their third album, in 1971. At the time the band was something of a commercial flop. Though the Allmans were drawing raves for their marathon live shows, which combined the Grateful Dead's go-anywhere jam ethos with a far superior musical precision, their first two releases had produced barely a ripple in the marketplace. The band's self-titled 1969 debut sold fewer than 35,000 copies, and *Idlewild South*, its follow-up, performed only marginally better, despite two singles, "Midnight Rider" and "Revival." The band struggled to understand why.

"When the first record came out at number 200 with an anchor, and dropped off the face of the earth, my brother and I did not get discouraged," recalls Gregg Allman, referring to his brother, guitarist Duane. "But I thought *Idlewild South* was a much better record, and when that died on the vine, I thought, Damn, maybe we were wrong about this group."

Despite the albums' lackluster sales, the Allman Brothers Band were drawing increasingly large and rabid crowds on their relentlessly paced tours. Audiences loved the band's rare combination of blues, jazz, rock and country, and its willingness to play until somebody pulled the plug. Finally, it dawned on the band and its management that a live album was the only way to accurately capture the group's spirit.

Featuring performances from two shows at New York City's famed concert venue, *At Fillmore East* remains rock's greatest live album 37 years after its release. It also stands as a testament to a great band at the peak of its power. Sadly, it would prove to be the final album completed by guitarist Duane Allman, who died shortly after its release. As such, it has proven to be something of an epitaph both for him and the first incarnation of the Allman Brothers Band.

"That album captured the band in all their glory," says producer Tom Dowd, who has been behind the boards for nearly a dozen Allman Brothers albums, including *At Fillmore East*, and worked with everyone from John Coltrane and Ray Charles to Cream and Lynyrd Skynyrd. "The Allmans' music has always had a perpetual swing sensation that is unique in rock. They swing like they're playing jazz when they play things that are tangential to the blues, and even when they play heavy rock. They're never vertical but always going forward, and it's always a groove."

Certainly, the improvisation and length of the tunes on *At Fillmore East* was more like jazz than rock: it contained just seven songs spread over four sides of vinyl, and each track showed the band in all of its spontaneous, jamming fury. "You Don't Love Me" and "Whipping Post" both occupied album sides by their lonesome selves, while "In Memory of Elizabeth Reed" clocked in at 13 minutes. Still, from the clarion slide guitar of "Statesboro Blues" that opens the album to the booming timpani roll of "Whipping Post" that closes it, there is nary a wasted moment among its 78 minutes.

Propelled upward and onward by bassist Berry Oakley, whose free-range style uniquely

Photos by Jim Marshall

Duane performing at the Fillmore; (opposite) a rare color outtake from the cover photo session

roamed the middle of the band's sound, and the rhythmic onslaught of double drummers Jai Johanny Johanson (a.k.a. Jaimoe) and Butch Trucks, the group seemed ready to blast off in any direction at any time. Dickey Betts and Duane Allman spurred each other onto new heights of fretboard ferocity and creativity with their pioneering guitar harmonies, while Gregg Allman's authentic blues singing and surging organ vamps kept even the most ambitious jams firmly rooted to terra firma.

"There's nothing too complicated about what makes *Fillmore* a great album," says former Allman Brothers guitarist Betts. "The thing is, we were a hell of a band, and we just got a good recording that captured what we sounded like."

Adds Jaimoe, "*Fillmore* was both a particularly great performance and a typical night."

To understand the album's importance to the Allmans, it helps to recognize just how hungry and desperate the band was at the time of its release. Both Gregg Allman and then-manager Phil Walden admit now that they considered cashing in their chips and cutting their losses.

"It seemed like I had just been wrong and that they were never going to catch on," Walden says. "People just didn't grasp what the Allmans were all about—musically or any other way. But they kept touring, state by state, city by city, going across the country, establishing themselves as the best live band around and building a base."

Allman says that the band played 306 nights in 1970, with most of the remaining days of that year spent traveling from one gig to the next. As the band continued to crisscross the country, jammed together in first a Ford Econoline van and then a Winnebago, its sound evolved and deepened. That development is well known to the hardcore tape traders who exchange copies of these shows like so many pieces of the Holy Grail. But there was a price to pay: "That kind of schedule puts a lot of wear and tear on your ass," Allman says. With their fan base growing steadily by word of mouth, the Allmans decided that they needed to capitalize on their concert success.

"We simply realized that we were a better live band than studio outfit because we were always ready to experiment—offstage as well as on, I might add," Allman says. "And the audience was a big part of what we did up there, which is something that couldn't be duplicated in a studio."

Once the decision to record live was made, the choice of venue was easy. Promoter Bill Graham was an early and important supporter of the Allmans, having repeatedly booked the band in his bicoastal rock emporiums, the Fillmores East (New York) and West (San Francisco). (To this day, New York remains the ABB's most supportive audience.) In those dark ages of rock promotion, the Fillmores were the only venues run in a consistently professional manner.

"New York crowds have always been great," says Betts. "But what made the Fillmore a special place was Bill Graham. He was the best promoter rock has ever had, and you could feel his influence in every single little thing at the Fillmore."

"He called a spade a spade, and not necessarily in a loving way," Allman adds. "Mr. Graham was a stern man, the most tell-it-like-it-is person I have ever met, and at first it was off-putting. But he was the most fair person, too, and after knowing him for while, you realized that this guy, unlike most of the other fuckers out there, was on the straight and narrow."

To cut the album, the band was booked into the Fillmore for three nights—March 11, 12 and 13, 1971, as the middle act behind opener Elvin Bishop and headliner Johnny Winter. A mobile 16-track recording studio was parked on the street outside the theater, with Dowd and a small crew set up inside. Things went smoothly until the band unexpectedly brought out sax player "Juicy" Carter and harmonica player Thom Doucette several songs into the first set.

"One of the guys asked me how to mic the horn, and I thought he was joking," Dowd recalls. "They started playing and the horn was leaking all over everything, rendering the songs unusable. I ran down at the break and grabbed Duane and said, 'The horn has to go!' and he went, 'But he's right on, man.' And I said, 'Duane, trust me, this isn't the time to try this out.' He asked if the harp could stick around, and I said sure, because I knew it could be contained and wiped out if necessary."

Though it was actually wiped from a few tracks (no one can remember which), Doucette's fine playing adds dimension to "You Don't Love Me" and "Done Somebody Wrong." Each night after playing, the band and Dowd would head uptown to the Atlantic Records studio and listen to playbacks of the night's performance. "We would just grab some beers and sandwiches and go through the show," Dowd says. "That way, the next night, they knew exactly what they had and which songs they didn't have to play again."

By using material from the second and third nights, the group had enough leftover material to fill more than half of its follow-up album, *Eat a Peach*, including the epic, 33-

minute "Mountain Jam," which was actually performed directly after *Fillmore*'s 23-minute "Whipping Post."

"We just felt like we could play all night, and sometimes we did," Betts recalls. "We could really hit the note. There's not a single fix on *Fillmore*. Everything you hear there is how we played it."

A few months after cutting the album, the band members were in Capricorn Records' Macon, Georgia, studio laying tracks when they were informed that the live album was done and cover art had to be selected immediately.

"We wanted to come up with a cover because, left to their own devices, the people at Atlantic did horrible things," Allman recalls. "I mean, these were the people who superimposed a picture of Sam and Dave onto a turtle [*for the cover of the soul duo's album* Hold On I'm Coming]! We wanted to make sure that the cover was as meat-and-potatoes as the band, so someone said, 'Let's just take a damn picture and make it look like we're standing in the alley waiting to go onstage.' "

Photographer Jim Marshall arrived and snapped the group sitting on its road cases outside the Macon studio. On the back side of the album, the crew stood in the musicians' place, probably the first and last time roadies have ever been so prominently featured.

"I've slowly come to realize that Duane left a hell of a legacy for dying at the age of 24. And a lot of it has to do with the *Fillmore* album."

–GREGG ALLMAN

culture pantheon. Yet, the recording was almost never released in its extended, double-album form.

"Atlantic/Atco rejected the idea of releasing a double live album," Walden recalls. "[*Atlantic executive*] Jerry Wexler thought it was ridiculous to preserve all these jams. But we explained to them that the Allman Brothers were the people's band, that playing was what they were all about, not recording, that a phonograph record was confining for a group like this."

Walden won out and was proven right when the record—"people priced" at three dollars below standard list price for a double album—slowly became a hit, and the Allman Brothers became the most heralded band in the nation. *Rolling Stone* proclaimed the Allmans "the best damn rock and roll band" in the country, and by fall, *Fillmore* was the Allman Brothers Band's first Gold album.

"All of a sudden, here comes fame and fortune," recalls Allman. "In a three- or four-week period, we went from rags to riches—from living on a three-dollar-a-day per diem to 'Get anything you want, boys.' But we didn't enjoy it for long. A lot of the initial impact of the joy was absent because of the heavy tragedy that happened to my brother. We worked so hard so long to get there, then, bam, he was gone."

"That was my brother's idea," Allman explains. "The crew always played a special role in our band. It goes back to the very beginning when we lived off the disability checks of Red Dog and Twiggs [*Lyndon, tour manager*]. It was like, 'Want a job? Got any money?' Putting them in a damn picture was the least we could do."

Just 90 days after recording the album and just before its release, the Allman Brothers Band played the Fillmore East's last show, having been personally selected by Graham to be the hallowed venue's final band. It must have seemed a bold, even wacky, move to many. But just weeks after the club shut its doors for good, *At Fillmore East* came out, forever linking the band and the club in the pop

Duane Allman was killed in a motorcycle crash on October 29, 1971, in Macon, while on a break from recording *Eat a Peach*. One month shy of his 25th birthday, he lived to see the band's breakthrough coming but was not able to fully experience it.

"At the time, I thought, Shit, my brother really got shortchanged, because he never quite got to see what he had accomplished," Allman says. "I felt that way for years, but I've slowly come to realize that he left a hell of a legacy for dying at the age of 24 years old. And a lot of it has to do with the *Fillmore* album. I still listen to it and I marvel at how fresh his licks are and how great his tone is. That boy was one of a kind, man, just like Oakley was. [*Bassist Berry Oakley died in a motorcycle accident a year after Duane Allman.*] The chance that all six of us would meet up and form a band is, like, unbelievable."

Allman pauses for a second to exhale a long breath and let out a little chuckle.

"If you want to hear what I'm talking about, go get you that album."

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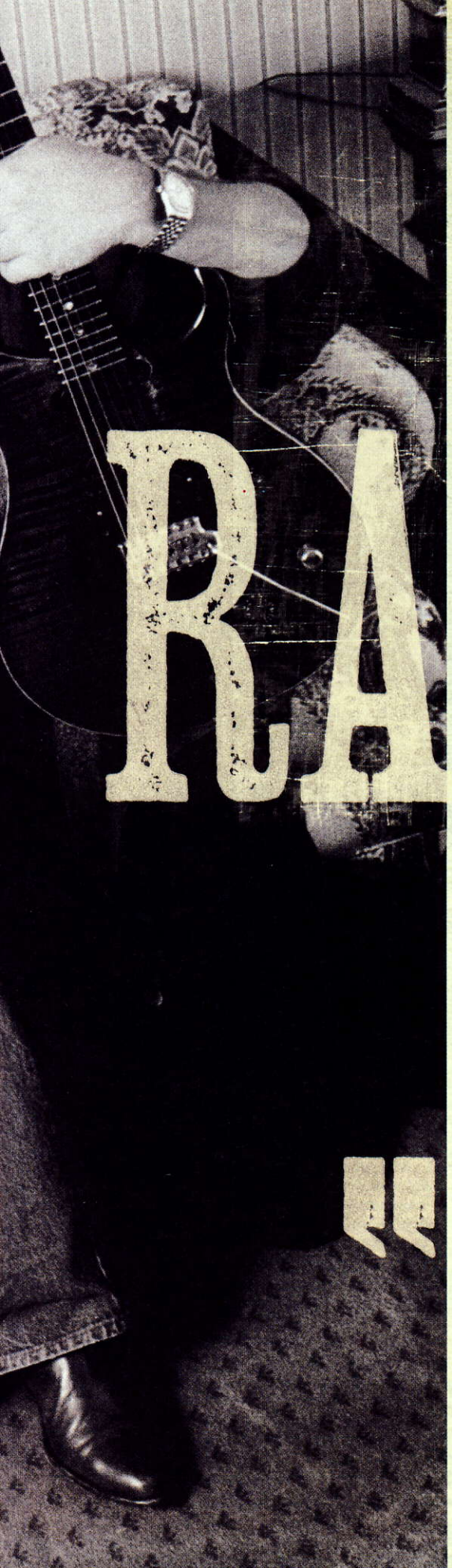


HELL RAISERS

GUITAR 57 LEGENDS

By Alan Paul || ISSUE NO. 106

In a rollicking, rowdy roundtable interview from the fall of 1992, lifelong southern rock fan ZAKK WYLDE pays homage to Lynyrd Skynyrd's GARY ROSSINGTON and ED KING.

"LYNYRD SKYNYRD MADE ME WANT TO PLAY GUITAR," Zakk Wylde says. "They were a sheer guitar hurricane."

While these sentiments may sound a bit strange coming from a man who is far more associated with "War Pigs" than "Free Bird," Zakk has always been a Skynyrd fanatic. He even dubbed the band with which he plays during Ozzy Osbourne's infrequent touring breaks "Lynyrd Skynhead." And if the Skynyrd influence isn't readily apparent in Zakk's playing with Ozzy, it practically leaps from the speakers when he proudly pulls a Skynhead demo tape from the pocket of his suede jacket and pops it in my car's tape deck.

We're on our way to Philadelphia's Four Seasons hotel to meet with Skynyrd's Ed King and Gary Rossington, and Zakk can barely contain his excitement. At the hotel the still-manic Zakk launches into a series of hilarious imitations of everyone from Ozzy to Rossington. He flips through *Lynyrd Skynyrd*, a three-CD boxed set, briefly examines the list of questions I've prepared and comically affects the persona of a jaded rock journalist/interviewer. He's a three-ring circus all by himself—until King and Rossington walk through the door.

Zakk shakes hands, then sits quietly as King hoists his Paul Reed Smith Custom

Photos by Jonnie Miles

and demonstrates the "real way" to play "Sweet Home Alabama." He shakes his head in amazement when King shows him the sea shells he uses for guitar picks. He grins shyly as the imposing Rossington teases him about his youth. Zakk is star-struck—and with good reason. Lynyrd Skynyrd are, quite simply, one of the greatest, most influential rock bands ever. They were the most critically acclaimed, commercially successful—and hardest rocking—of the Allman Brothers–influenced Seventies southern rock bands. With fierce regional pride, the Jacksonville, Florida, natives always evinced tremendous creativity and originality, mixing Allmans-esque guitar harmonies with crunchy, Stones-influenced rhythms and Cream-style distorted guitars. At the heart of the band's sound were the amazing guitar army of Rossington, King and Allen Collins and the forceful presence of vocalist Ronnie Van Zant, who combined a country voice with a heavy metal swagger.

And while some of their southern rock peers took the boogie ethic to excess, Skynyrd never did, in large part because they knew how to write great songs. Almost every Skynyrd album featured an instant classic: "Free Bird," "Sweet Home Alabama," "You Got That Right," "What's Your Name" and others. All remain radio staples.

Skynyrd suffered a dry spell, beginning in 1975, around the time King left the band. It lasted until they added guitarist Steve Gaines and recorded the landmark live album *One More from the Road*. Gaines, a gifted and wide-ranging guitarist and songwriter, infused the band with new energy and inspired some of Rossington and Collins' finest fretwork. Next came 1977's *Street Survivors*, easily their best, most consistent album. But before Lynyrd Skynyrd could reap the fruits of their second coming, their charter plane crashed into a Mississippi swamp, killing Van Zant and Gaines and seriously injuring the other band members.

A decade later, Lynyrd Skynyrd reformed for a tribute tour, with Johnnie Van Zant, Ronnie's brother, taking over as vocalist. But even as they defied the odds in coming back, tragedy again struck the band when Collins died. Still, they pressed on, with King returning and longtime associate Randall Hall joining as third guitarist. *Lynyrd Skynyrd 1991* was a solid, if unspectacular, album, paving the way for *The Last Rebel*. A much more ambitious and confident project than its predecessor, *The Last Rebel* is testament to Lynyrd Skynyrd's complete rejuvenation.

As a Skynyrd junkie, Zakk knows all this. In fact, maybe he knows it all too well. As we settle down to begin the interview, the cocky rock star becomes the humble 25-year-old guitarist meeting his heroes.

GUITAR WORLD One of Lynyrd Skynyrd's trademarks is that, even with three guitarists, you could always tell who was playing what parts. In large part that was because you each played different guitars. Gary, you played a Les Paul, Allen played a Firebird, and Ed a Strat. Did you ever get together and work that out?

ED KING No. I was the only one who switched for that reason. If I had played a Gibson, I would have sounded too much like them. I always hated Strats because they're harder to play, and I had always been a Gibson man, but I made the switch and adjusted pretty quickly. Of course, now I play a Paul Reed Smith, which I think has the best of both worlds.

GARY ROSSINGTON I've played a Les Paul since the day I bought this baby [*holds up his '59 Sunburst*].

ZAKK WYLDE Did Allen always play a Firebird?

ROSSINGTON Pretty much. He played a Melody Maker and an SG in the beginning, but he liked the Firebird because it looked different from our guitars and the SG's neck was too skinny—he had these big, ol' long fingers. There are a lot of great new guitars out there now, but they're too easy to play. I need to pull the strings to get the right feel out of it. People don't pull strings no more; they use the bar, instead.

KING We came up in a completely different guitar age. If a pickup went out, there were no replacements, which is something you probably can't relate to, Zakk. In 1968 I bought a 1955 Les Paul—a great guitar—and when the

Rossington, Wylde and King

pickups finally went I sold the guitar for scrap.

ROSSINGTON And if something fucked up on my '59 Les Paul, I had to find the original parts out of another guitar to replace it.

WYLDE Nowadays they can take a picture of the inside of a guitar and make an exact replica—right down to exactly where the wires connect, where the cavities are and everything.

ROSSINGTON When we were in Japan, I was offered 30 grand for my '59 so they could do that. I laughed at them. The thing's not an investment—it's part of my arm.

GW Ed, you joined Lynyrd Skynyrd as a bassist. Had you played a lot of bass prior to joining the band?

KING Bass is my primary instrument, but back then, I wasn't the greatest bass player because I was trying to adapt to their music. The day before I switched to guitar, Ronnie came over, put his arm around me, and said, "Ed, you really are the worst bass player I've ever played with." And I couldn't disagree with him. [*laughs*] Getting Leon back and moving me over to guitar, so that Gary and Allen didn't have to overdub to get all the guitar parts we wanted, gave us a real boost. We wrote "Sweet Home Alabama" the first day Leon returned and I moved to guitar.

WYLDE Leon's an amazing bass player, and he does a great job of staying out of the way of the three guitars.

KING Actually, Leon plays bass like a guitar. While we were recording the new album, I had to double one of his bass parts on a six-string bass—and I suddenly realized how great his part was. He's a genius, and any part he plays makes a statement. Just listen to the bass line on "That Smell"—it's amazing. So the first time I heard Leon play bass, I wasn't really interested in playing bass anymore.

WYLDE He plays bass more like an upright player.

ROSSINGTON That's because of the plane crash. His arm is set in a certain position, and that's how he has to play. After the crash he had to go to therapy and lift five-pound hand weights all day for a long time to strengthen it. Today, if he shakes your hand, he crushes it. [*laughs*]

GW Gary, I understand you had a steel bar put in your left arm as a result of the crash. Did you have to change your playing style at all afterward?

ROSSINGTON Not really—I just had to get used to constant, day-in, day-out pain. [*laughs*] Actually, we've been playing a lot of outdoor ampitheaters, and with the bar in my arm, I can always tell when it's going to rain.

GW After the success of "Sweet Home Alabama," Skynyrd really started being labeled as a "southern rock" band. How did you feel about that?

ROSSINGTON We had always considered ourselves just a band from the South, not really a southern rock band. But everyone needs to put labels on everything, so we just went with it.

WYLDE Better than being called disco, man. [*laughs*]

ROSSINGTON Yeah, and back then, you were either southern rock or disco.

KING But it really doesn't do us any good now. I don't think the term fits us.

ROSSINGTON It's always been sort of a vague term anyhow. When the southern rock scene started, Charlie Daniels was real big and that was more of a country band, the Allmans were more of a jam band and Marshall Tucker was country...

KING ...And Ronnie was really a country singer in a rock and roll band.

ROSSINGTON We were influenced by Cream, the Yardbirds, the Animals, the Stones and the Beatles. We took that and mixed it with our own styles, which I guess were largely shaped by being southern. But we never really thought about it.

GW Ed, did your being from Los Angeles create any problems when you joined the band, since everyone else was from the South, and had been together since early childhood?

KING Musically, there was no problem—but it was a different culture, and that took some time getting used to.

WYLDE Where did you guys meet?

KING I was playing in a band, and Lynyrd Skynyrd opened for us on tour.

GW Was your band Strawberry Alarm Clock?

KING I'm afraid so.

ROSSINGTON Don't say the "s" word around him! [*laughs*]

KING I probably shouldn't be so bitter about it, but "Incense and Peppermints" was the first song I ever wrote. It went to No. 1, and I got ripped off.

ROSSINGTON He got three cents for writing a song that you still hear today. We were all kids back then—we signed all our publishing away to managers and accountants. We don't see money today for "Sweet Home," "Free Bird" or any of those songs.

KING Everybody got screwed back then.

WYLDE Ozzy told me that as long as the guys in Sabbath got all the booze, blow and weed that they wanted, they were happy.

KING No kidding. That's how we all were. That reminds me of a cool story. When we first started out, we opened for Black Sabbath, and the audience threw cans, tomatoes—anything they could find—at us. We played four songs and left the stage to save our asses, and then Sabbath had all kinds of technical problems. It was an hour and a half before they went on, and the crowd went *nuts*. Sabbath finally hit the stage, blew out all their amps after two songs and walked off. It was insane. I don't think they understood that we had a different electrical system than they had in Europe, and just plugged in their British gear. I could tell you stories that would blow your mind from every day when we were on tour back then.

WYLDE My old lady and I just had a little girl, and Ozzy said that if we wanted, the three of us could stay on his tour bus, where it's quiet. But then he said, "I swear, if you bring that southern rock shit on the bus, you're out of here!" [*laughs*] Man, I drive him crazy with all my southern rock.

GW What kind of music do the members of Lynyrd Skynyrd listen to?

ROSSINGTON Lots of stuff that would probably shock people. Don't tell anyone, but we listen to a lot of classical music.

WYLDE Ozzy's a huge John Lennon fan.

ROSSINGTON Oh yeah, us too—we listen to a lot of Beatles.

"After Ed left, Leslie West was going to become our third guitarist, but he wanted to call the band 'Lynyrd Skynyrd and Leslie West,' and we just said, 'F-you.'"

—ROSSINGTON

KING The other day, on the back of the bus, I listened to something great, a song by Mountain called "Never in My Life."

ROSSINGTON You know, one time I broke my finger in New York, and we still had to play a show. Mountain had broken up, and Leslie West came into town to fill in for me. We all flew in together, and Leslie had to have two fucking seatbelts. [*laughs*] We thought he was really cool, but we had to laugh at that. After Ed left, Leslie was going to become our third guitarist, but he wanted to call the band "Lynyrd Skynyrd and Leslie West," and we just said, "Fuck you."

GW Then Steve Gaines joined, and he just seemed to energize the band.

ROSSINGTON He was a phenomenal player. His sister, Cassie, was one of our backup singers, and she asked if he could jam with us. I said, "Fuck, no. Nobody jams with us!" But she convinced us to give him a shot. So he joined us onstage one night, with no rehearsal or anything, and as soon as he started playing Allen and I looked at each other and our jaws dropped. We offered him the job, and he quit his band that night and joined the next day. He could play anything—chicken pickin', country, blues, hard rock. Allen and I both just jump-started our playing with him onstage. His death was a tremendous loss to the guitar world.

WYLDE Man, the next guy who joins Skynyrd will probably fear for his life. You guys have been fuckin' brutalized!

ROSSINGTON In the plane crash, I broke just about every bone in my body, and Ed just smashed his finger a few months ago.

WYLDE I heard stories that you guys used to brawl all the time.

KING *Noooo,* not *us.* [*laughs*]

WYLDE Ozzy once told me about a show you guys did with Sabbath. "All I remember," he said, "was that the guitar player came out with a bandage on his hand, and the singer came out with a bandage on his head, and they were hugging each other goin', 'I'm sorry, brother—I love you, man.' "

ROSSINGTON [*laughs*] Yeah, we used to do that stuff, but we're too old to now. When we started out, we'd play clubs where people would mess with us just because we had long hair. And we'd just say, "Fuck you," and fight.

KING Things were rough back then. There were places in Florida where we had to ride crouched down in the back seat to hide from the cops, because they'd throw your ass in jail just because they didn't like the way you looked.

GW Do you think the general tensions of the South came out in your music?

ROSSINGTON Yeah, I guess so. The way that we lived came out in our instruments, our singing and our songwriting. I remember on one of our first records, our engineer said that we always looked really mad when we played. We weren't *always* mad, but we learned to play hard and mean.

GW Skynyrd is primarily known for its rockers, but the band has always done such subtle songs as "Tuesday's Gone" and "Simple Man."

KING When we were just about done cutting the first album, we played "Simple Man" for [*producer*] Al Kooper, and he said, "You guys are *not* gonna record that song." So Ronnie took Kooper out to the parking lot, opened the door to Kooper's Bentley, and said, "Get in." Kooper's sittin' there behind the wheel, and Ronnie shut the door and said, "When we're done cuttin' it, we'll call you." We cut the whole tune without him. When a band knows what it wants to do, it has to go with its heart and not listen to people on the outside.

ROSSINGTON And we've always liked doing the pretty songs. I mean, we grew up on the Beatles.

WYLDE You can't always sound pissed-off.

ROSSINGTON Yeah. Sometimes you just have to light a joint, sit back and write something pretty.

GW Actually, some of your most intense, sad songs—"All I Can Do Is Write About It," "Am I Losin'?"—are slow and pretty.

ROSSINGTON That's true. I'm real proud of "All I Can Do," which was a song about ecology even before there was recycling. It told people to be careful, quit building things and leave some trees.

GW Did that song reflect feelings you guys had about the South becoming less rural?

ROSSINGTON Nah, we weren't that heavy, man. Sometimes we didn't even know what we were writing. In fact, the only reason we first started writing songs was because we ran out of songs to copy!

KING We never really thought about things like that. Ronnie would always say that there was no method to his madness.

WYLDE Your boxed set includes the original version of "Free Bird," which doesn't have the extended ending.

How did you come up with the song's concluding jam?

ROSSINGTON It was a slow song, and it ended too early. We were doing four sets a night, and Ronnie said we needed to make the song longer, because we didn't have enough material and were trying not to do any covers. Each night the song got a little longer, but Ronnie always said to make it longer. Finally it was 10 minutes long.

KING MCA said we couldn't put a 10-minute song on an album, because nobody would play it. Of course, that was the song everyone gravitated toward!

WYLDE Did you ever imagine that 20 years down the line "Free Bird" would still be played constantly on the radio?

ROSSINGTON Believe me, that was beyond our wildest dreams.

KING But I knew "Sweet Home" was a classic the minute we wrote it. The same goes for "Saturday Night Special." I played Ronnie this riff one day in rehearsal, and he just nodded. Ronnie never wrote down or recorded anything. So the next day I was bummed because the groove was lost, but Ronnie called me over and sang a song in my ear based on that lost riff—and it was "Saturday Night Special."

ROSSINGTON Ronnie felt that if you had to write something down, it wasn't worth remembering. Hell, I wish we had recorded all those early songs, because we'd have a lot more material now. [*laughs*]

WYLDE If it's a good idea, it'll always come back to you.

KING Well...Gary, before I ever played a gig with you guys, we rehearsed for four weeks, and wrote a song each day—most of which are now lost. And that's a damn shame.

WYLDE What was cool about those days, was that every band sounded different. You had Skynyrd, Jethro Tull, Deep Purple, Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath—and no one sounded like the others.

KING Yeah, but 100-watt amps had just been invented, so it was easy to be different. [*laughs*] None of us knew what we were doing.

WYLDE Ozzy says that nowadays, all you have to do to get a record deal is grow your hair long—but back then, only the good bands made it.

ROSSINGTON You can watch MTV and close your eyes, and you probably won't be able to tell one band from the other. All these rock bands sound the same, and all these guitarists are just jerkin' off. I love Eddie Van Halen—he's so good he's a freak of nature—but once you've heard him play one song you've heard just about every fuckin' note there is to play. What's left?

WYLDE I didn't get hooked on the whole Van Halen thing, because everyone I hung around with was older and listened to Skynyrd, the Allmans, Marshall Tucker, Charlie Daniels. And I'm only 25.

ROSSINGTON Shit, I got scars that are older than you! [*laughs*]

KING Who else did you get weaned on?

WYLDE Frank Marino, Jimi Hendrix and Tony Iommi. Then I got into country, and, to me, that's the hardest thing to play.

KING Flatpicking? Absolutely. You know, I went to a guitar show in Dallas last spring and jammed with Tom Keifer of Cinderella I don't know where his roots are, but he is one hell of a blues player. Gary actually wrote a few songs with him that are on *The Last Rebel*.

WYLDE One time I was at the Hammersmith Odeon in London with Cinderella, and Tom asked if I wanted to play "Sweet Home Alabama." I was half-crocked, and walked up to the front of the stage and fell right into the orchestra pit! [*laughs*] I was using Eric Brittingham's [*Cinderella bassist*] goldtop, and it fell right on top of me. I tore up the cartilage in my knee, but the guitar was fine—and still in tune.

KING Cinderella often close their shows with "Sweet Home," and one time I said to Tom, "I'll bet you a dollar-damn-fifty that you can't play the chorus the right way." He said, "Sure I can," and started playing it and it was wrong. There is one little thing in the chorus that absolutely makes it—and nobody plays it correctly. I think it's those kinds of things that have kept Skynyrd alive—the little things you only notice after you light up a joint.

WYLDE When do you think the whole southern thing started dying?

KING When Molly Hatchet came out. [*laughs*] I mean it.

WYLDE What's your impression of the Allman Brothers?

KING The Allmans were the founding fathers of the southern rock thing, and if it wasn't for Duane Allman, none of us would be here today. Duane paved the way. He was the greatest ever.

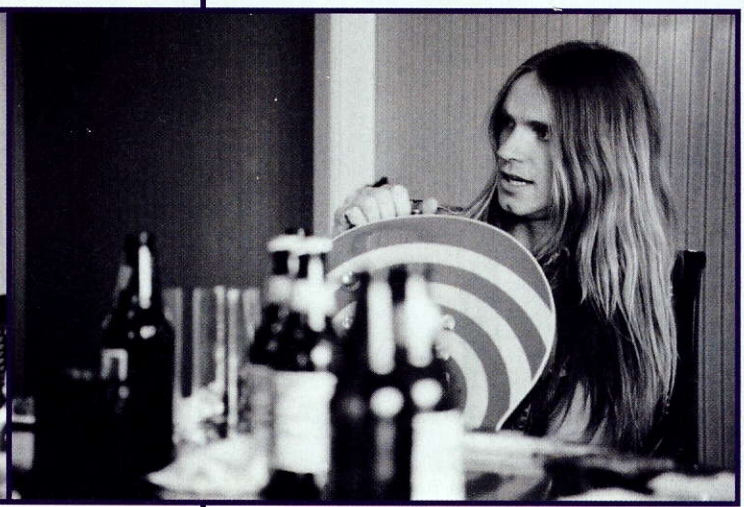
GW And he died when he was 24. It's mindboggling to think of how much he had accomplished, and what he could have done.

KING He was the best, and I don't think he could have gotten any better; I think he died at the apex of his career. He had already absolutely mastered slide-playing. I saw him play on October 9th and 12th, 1971, and he was dead on the 29th. I went to see Jeff Beck that night, and when I was driving home, all I heard on the radio was, "...Allman was considered the top contemporary guitarist of his day." I just pulled over and cried for an hour—it was all I needed to hear to know that he was dead.

ROSSINGTON Duane was almost like a god. I remember one time they were playin' a free show on a Jacksonville ball field. Duane pulled up in his old white Cadillac about a half-hour late; the whole band was already playing. He ran up and grabbed his guitar. It was tuned to standard, so right at full volume he tuned down to open D, pulled out his slide and just took over. It was mesmerizing. Allen and I used to be the first ones there, hours before the show—so hard to describe the impact it had on us as young guitarists to stand there and see that guy play.

GW Has Lynyrd Skynyrd's approach to recording

> **"Man, the next guy who joins Skynyrd will probably fear for his life. You guys have been brutalized."**
> –WYLDE



changed since the early days?

ROSSINGTON We didn't change the way we write, play or record on our new album. We still just plug in and do it, with no effects or gimmicks, and we still record everything analog, then mix it digitally. This is a live band, and we still record that way.

WYLDE The sound you guys got on your early albums was a lot thicker than most bands get today using digital equipment. Ozzy tells me the same thing about the early Black Sabbath records.

KING Digital is too brittle.

WYLDE So the whole band still plays at the same time?

ROSSINGTON Yeah. I played half my solos while recording the basic track. It gives you a better feel when you're playing along with the band and feeding off each other, instead of using headphones.

WYLDE I can't handle the sound of headphones. I just go into the control room and listen to the speakers, and it sounds huge.

ROSSINGTON I hate recording. It makes you think about what you're playing, and I hate to think—it kills some of the magic.

WYLDE I dig it. You can do anything in there—it's like painting a picture.

ROSSINGTON But we need to play together. Everyone has to paint the same picture at the same time, which is what we do onstage.

WYLDE So what happens when you guys fuck up your guitar tracks while recording—do you use the scratch track?

ROSSINGTON What do you mean? We never fuck up! [*laughs*] No, we'll just go back and fix that part, and if there's any leakage, we'll just go around it.

WYLDE Randall Hall's a great player—and he'd have to be to play guitar with you guys. How's he fitting in with the band?

KING Great. His forte is solos.

ROSSINGTON He's so good, it pisses me off. He's got the same frets, same strings and same notes, and he comes up with shit that never occurred to me. He'll do something that's wrong, but it sounds right.

KING Randall comes up with notes that aren't there. He's the only one of us who can play 32nd notes—in a blues context. If I tried to do that, I'd sound like an idiot.

GW It's amazing that you guys have been able to regenerate yourselves and continue making albums and being a musical force.

ROSSINGTON You know, it is amazing. After the plane crash, I honestly thought that we'd never play together again as Lynyrd Skynyrd. Then, 10 years after the crash, we did a tour which was just supposed to be a one-time only tribute to the band and our music. Everywhere we went, the reception was tremendous; we saw people with their kids—and they both knew the songs. They were singing along, cryin' to some songs, and just generally having a damn good time. That was really touching, so we decided to try to keep it going. It's a real honor to see that people still care about Skynyrd.

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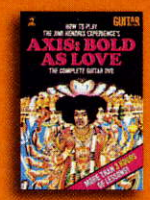

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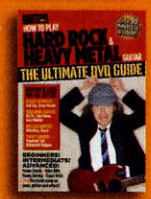

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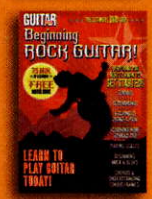

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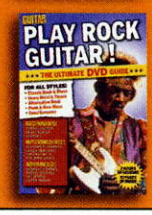

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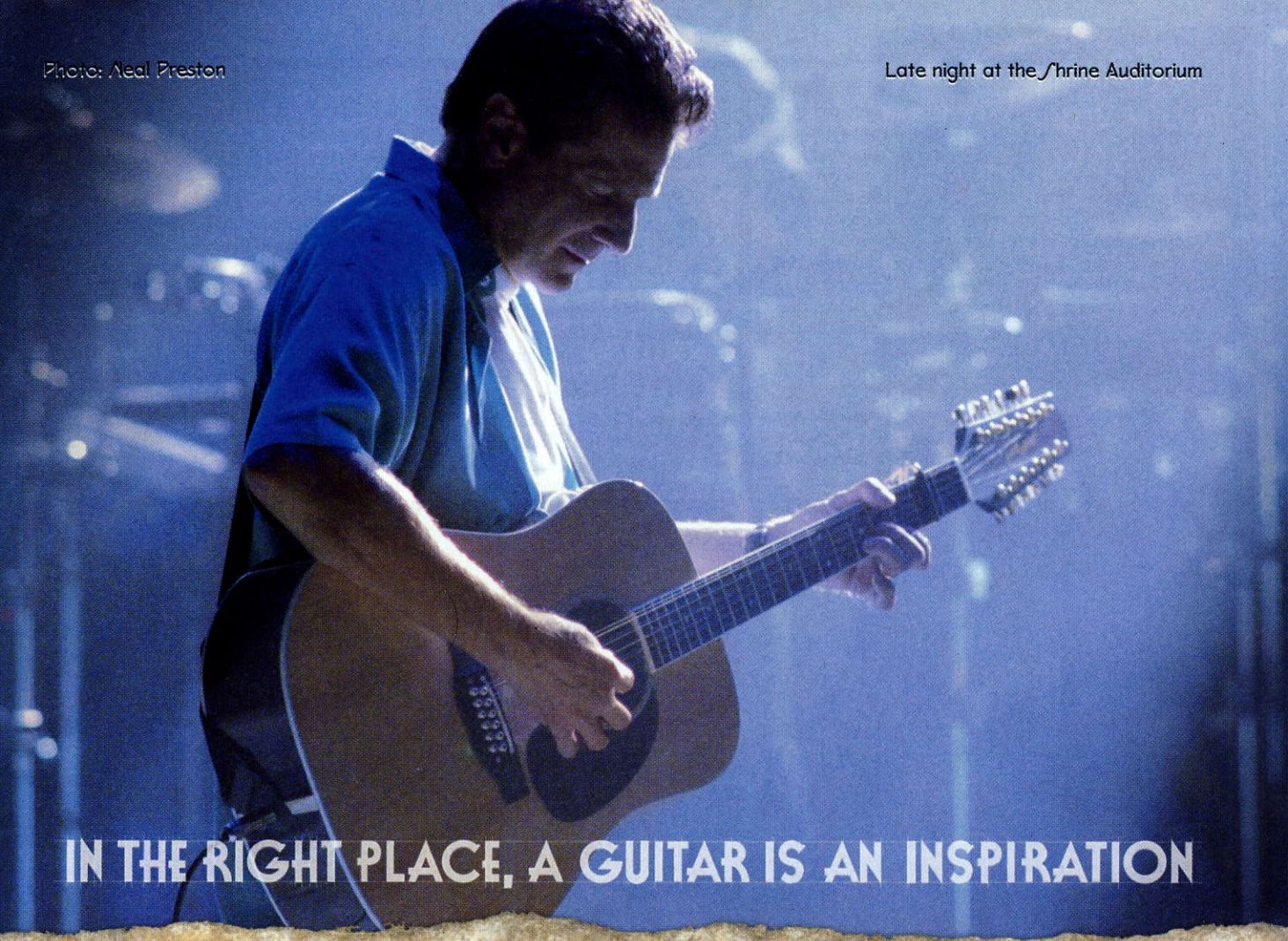

IN THE RIGHT PLACE, A GUITAR IS AN INSPIRATION

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Rossington with lead singer Ronnie Van Zant

Gimme Three CHORDS

By Alan Paul

GUITAR LEGENDS 65 ISSUE No. 106

Guitarist GARY ROSSINGTON explains the origins of some of LYNYRD SKYNYRD's—and rock's—finest moments.

"WE USED A LOT OF D-C-G progressions," Lynyrd Skynyrd guitarist Gary Rossington says with a shrug and a laugh about his band's songwriting process. "There's only seven chords, so you got to use the same ones over and over. It's all in what you do with them. I could write a dozen different songs with the same three or four chords but they'd all be entirely different."

Rossington and company certainly have always had a knack for doing a lot with a little. For while Skynyrd are renowned for their aggressive, three-guitar attack and the seemingly endless soloing that such a lineup inevitably produces, what's really made Skynyrd a staple of classic rock radio is their songs: instantly memorable four-minute rockers like "Sweet Home Alabama," "Gimme Three Steps" and "What's Your Name," as well as extended ballads such as "Simple Man," "Tuesday's Gone" and, of course, "Free Bird." Remarkably, the latter, one of rock's most-played, best-loved songs, was one of the first songs Lynyrd Skynyrd ever wrote—penned when singer Ronnie Van Zant and guitarists Allen Collins and Gary Rossington were still in their teens.

Like virtually all of their material, "Free Bird" was written as a collaboration between Van Zant and one the group's guitarists. This loose but consistent formula served Skynyrd extremely well, producing classic songs which quickly made them one of the nation's most popular bands. By 1975, however, when third guitarist Ed King left the group suffering from burnout, Skynyrd had fallen into a bit of a creative rut, as reflected by *Gimme Back My Bullets*, an unusually flaccid affair. But before anybody could write their epitaph, they added guitarist Steve Gaines, whose songwriting and phenomenal playing infused them with a new energy. The rejuvenated band shines on 1976's live *One More for the Road* and the following year's *Street Survivors*. The latter is one of the best-arranged and played guitar albums in rock history.

Tragically, before the group could reap the fruits of this rebirth, their chartered plane crashed into a Mississippi swamp on October 20, 1977, killing three members—including Gaines and Van Zant—seriously injuring everyone else and seemingly forever putting an end to the group.

A decade later, the surviving members of the group got together for a "Tribute" tour with Van Zant's brother, Johnnie, taking over as vocalist. Enthusiastic audience response led to a full-time reunion, which has produced numerous albums, most recently 2003's *Vicious Cycle* (Sanctuary). Here, Rossington recalls the origins of some of the band's best-loved tunes.

MICHAEL ZIGARIS

"FREE BIRD"

pronounced 'léh-'nérd 'skin-'nérd (1973)

★★★★★★★★★

"ALLEN HAD THE CHORDS for the beginning part for two full years. We were just beginning to write—that was actually one of the first songs we ever completed—and Ronnie kept saying that there were too many chords so he couldn't find a melody for it. He thought that he had to change with every chord change. We kept asking him to write something to these chords, and he kept telling us to forget about it!

"Then one day we were at rehearsal and Allen started playing those chords, and Ronnie said, 'Those are pretty. Play them again.' Allen played it again, and Ronnie said, 'Okay, I got it.' And he wrote the lyrics in three or four minutes—the whole damned thing! He came up with a lot of stuff that way, and he never wrote anything down. His motto was, If you can't remember it, it's not worth remembering.

"So we started playing it in clubs, but it was just the slow part. Then Ronnie said, 'Why don't you do something at the end of that so I can take a break for a few minutes.' So I came up with those three chords at the end, and Allen played over them, then I soloed and then he soloed. It all evolved out of a jam one night. So we started playing it that way, but Ronnie kept saying, 'It's not long enough. Make it longer,' because we were playing three or four sets a night, and he was looking to fill it up. Then one of our roadies told us we should check out this piano part that another roadie, Billy Powell, had come up with as an intro for the song. We did—and he went from being a roadie to a member right then.

"Everybody told us that we were crazy to put the song on our first album, because it was too long. Our record company begged us not to include it. And when it first came out, they did all kind of awful edits until it got big enough where it didn't matter any more. It humbles us to think that it's been played so much—and it's still played. But it's not magic; it's still just a song to us."

"GIMME THREE STEPS"

pronounced 'léh-'nérd 'skin-'nérd (1973)

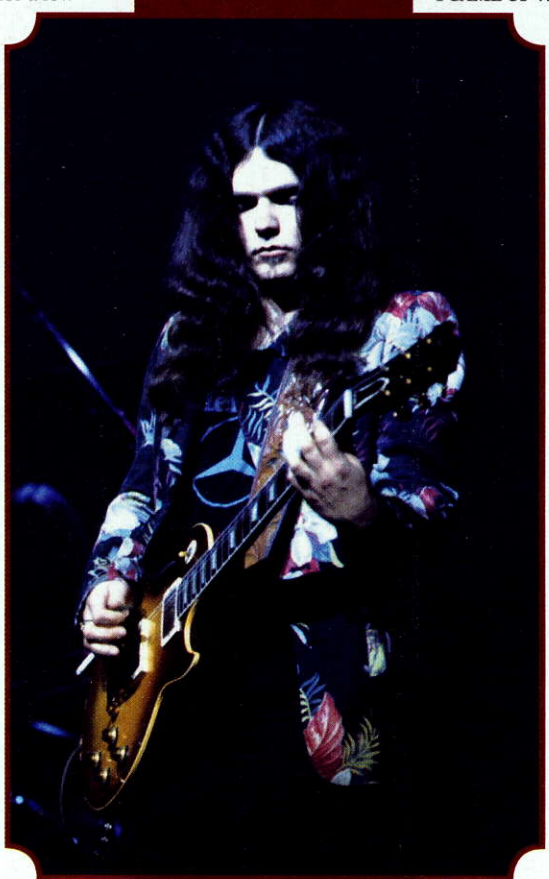
★★★★★★★★★

"THIS IS ANOTHER TRUE STORY. Ronnie went into a bar to look for someone, and me and Allen were too young to get in, so were waiting for him outside. And we were waiting and waiting. Then he came running out with a big ol' guy chasing him, yelling. He had started dancing with this chick, and this guy came in and was going to beat him up. Ronnie said, 'Just give me three steps and I'm gone.' The guy had a gun and he was a redneck and he was drunk—a nasty combination of things—and Ronnie said, 'If you're going to shoot me, it's going to be in the ass or in the elbow.' And he took off like a bat out of hell.

"We got in the car and split, and he told us what happened, and we were laughing, and we kind of wrote the song right there, drove over to Allen's house, got his guitar and finished it.

"The more wild experiences you have, the better songs you can write. I'm not necessarily proud of everything we ever did, but that's just the truth. We always just considered ourselves a working-man's band and thought every song should tell a story that people could relate to. When we finish a song, you know what it's about, whereas some groups have songs you may dig but not understand. I think that's why our songs have lasted as long as they have."

> **When we finish a song, you know what it's about. I think that's why our songs have lasted as long as they have."**



"SWEET HOME ALABAMA"

Second Helping (1974)

★★★★★★★★★

"I CAME UP WITH THE banjo/steel guitar part—it's just a fingerpicked D, C, G progression—and the little opening riff, which I kept playing over and over again. Ronnie started writing lyrics at rehearsal one day and saying, 'Play that again. Play that again.' And after about an hour he had all the words. Then Ed [*King*] took it home and put in all the little fills and licks and arranged it.

"It was basically a joke song. We used to travel through Alabama a lot and get onto back roads and just marvel at how pretty it was and how nice the people were. And Neil Young was, and still is, one our favorite artists, so when he came out with 'Southern Man' and 'Alabama,' criticizing the South, we said, 'Well, what does he know? He's from *Canada*!' So we threw that line about him in there. We were told by some people to take out the parts about Neil Young and [*former Alabama governor*] George Wallace, but we said, 'Hey it's just a song, and we're going to record it the way we wrote it.'

"Most of our songs come through us. It either happens real quick or it doesn't happen at all. Actually, Ronnie wrote most of his lyrics either driving around Jacksonville checking out different neighborhoods—especially poor ones, black and white—or in the shower. You know how people sing in the shower? Well, Ronnie did that, but he made up songs—melody, verse, chorus, bridge and all. Many times when we were on the road, he'd end up running into my room with a towel around his waist, dripping wet, saying, 'Check this out. Write some music to that real quick.' So I'd try to write a few chords to get a rough idea of where the song was going, then either Allen or Ed or I would go back and finish the song."

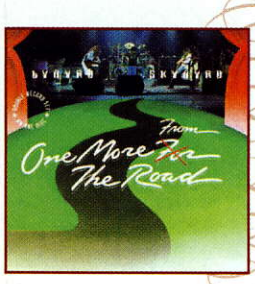
RICHARD AARON/RETNA LTD.

"CALL ME THE BREEZE"

Second Helping (1974)

★★★★★★★★★

"WE ALWAYS LIKED J.J. Cale, and we heard 'Breeze' one night sitting around the house and Ronnie said, 'Let's do that!' But it didn't work the way he did it—a real straight shuffle—so I wrote the arrangement, which was completely different. If we had changed the lyrics, it would have been a completely different song. We did the same thing to Merle Haggard's 'Honky Tonk Night Time Man.' "



"CROSSROADS"

One More for the Road (1976)

★★★★★★★★★

"WE DID THAT AS A tribute to Cream, one of our all-time favorite bands. We saw them on their farewell tour and they completely blew our minds, so we made this a regular part of our set. In fact, it was our encore for years, until 'Free Bird' became so big that we basically had to do that last. By the time we recorded the live album, it had been such a part of our set for so long that we felt we had to include it. Also, our producer, Tom Dowd, engineered the Cream version and he told us the story about how it came together, and that really inspired us to want to re-record it."

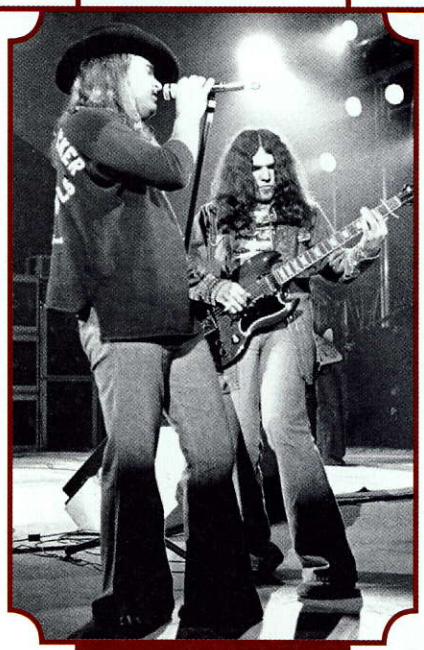
"I KNOW A LITTLE" and "YOU GOT THAT RIGHT"

Street Survivors (1977)

★★★★★★★★★

"I THINK THESE TWO SONGS sum up what Steve Gaines meant to the band. He wrote both of them and sang 'You Got That Right' as a duet with Ronnie. He was a great songwriter and singer and an incredible guitarist. I've never heard anybody, including any of us, play the picking he did on 'I Know a Little' quite right. Steve had a lot to do with the writing and arrangements throughout this album, and his playing was so good it really inspired us. When he joined, we were kind of in a lull. We were still doing well—selling a lot of tickets and records—but the music was getting a little boring to us. We needed a little spark of inspiration, and Steve provided it. We started getting together and jamming at night. It put us back in the frame of mind we had at the beginning.

"Steve was so good, he was a freak of nature. He used to piss us off because he could do so many things that me and Allen couldn't. Every time I ever went to his house or his hotel room, he had his black Les Paul on. He'd order room service and eat with his guitar on. He'd sit around and talk and not play it for an hour, but it would be strapped on. He'd watch TV with it on, play it during commercials, then stop. It was like his third arm."



"We were told by some people to take out the parts about Neil Young [*in 'Sweet Home Alabama'*], but we said, 'Hey it's just a song, and we're going to record it the way we wrote it.' "

"HONKY TONK NIGHT TIME MAN"

Street Survivors (1977)

★★★★★★★★★

"THIS IS A MERLE HAGGARD song, which we did to show our love for him and for country music in general. Steve played an incredible solo here also, and it was a live first take. We only knew that it was a G progression and he went out and played a mind-boggling solo. He didn't even hardly know the song, but he played the shit out of it. We were standing in the control room with our jaws dropped, and after he finished playing, he strolled in and said, 'How'd I do?' We told him to go home and call it a day, because we knew it couldn't get any better."

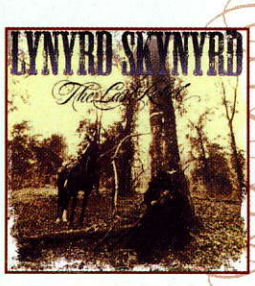
"WHAT'S YOUR NAME"

Street Survivors (1977)

★★★★★★★★★

"ME AND RONNIE WERE JUST sitting in a hotel room one night, and I had those chords, which I had just written that day. And he right off the bat started singing. The original lyrics were, 'It's eight o'clock, and, boy, is it time to go.' Ronnie had just gotten an itinerary from his brother Donnie, who was in .38 Special, and their first stop was Boise, Idaho. So Ronnie changed the first line to 'It's eight o'clock in Boise, Idaho,' which immediately made it a real on-the-road song.

"But it's all basically a true story. One of our road crew got in a fight at a bar with one of the hotel guests and they kicked us out, and we said we'd leave if they'd send a bottle of champagne to our room. It's just about being young and free—21 and unmarried. We'd go to a town and meet a chick, then forget her name. And when you'd come back to town, you'd say, 'What was your name, honey?' "



"THE LAST REBEL"

The Last Rebel (1993)

★★★★★★★★★

"THIS IS A VERY MOODY SONG. We had to really get in the mood to record it, then we just cut it live. I wrote the music and named it at my house in Wyoming. Then Johnnie and Michael Lunn and Robert Johnson wrote the lyrics. The first verse is about a Civil War soldier, and the second verse is about me, they say. And the third verse is sort of about us—the last rebels, out on the road, still doing our thing.

"It's one of my favorite songs to do live, which is a good sign. It really holds up with our old material. When I see it on our set list, I go, 'All right.' But we never get sick of playing any of our songs, because of the adrenaline we get from the audience's response."

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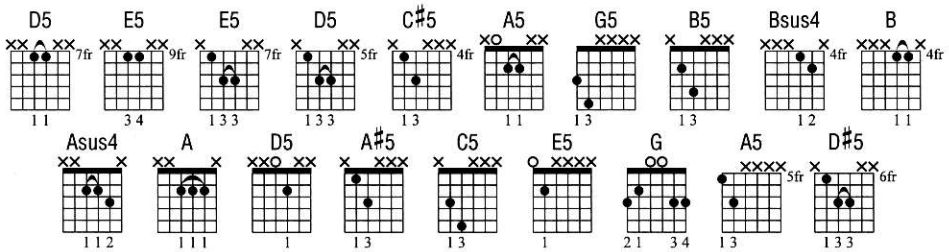
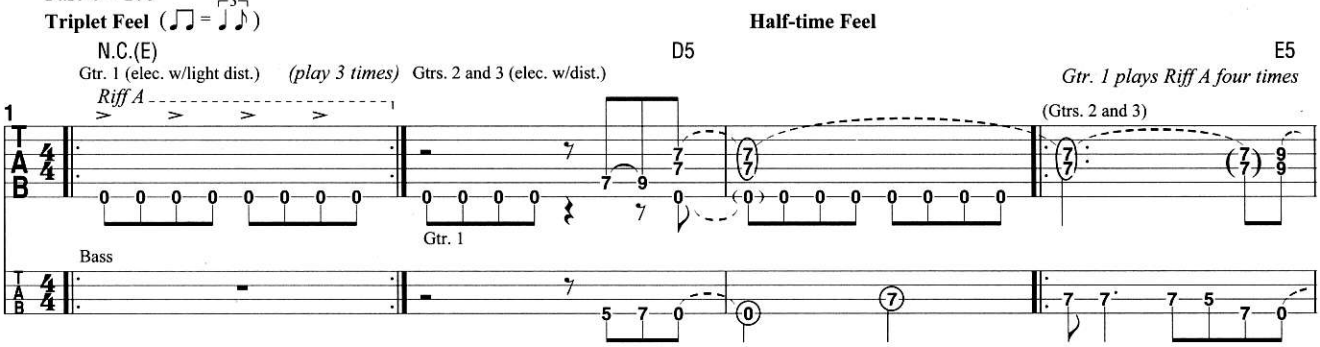
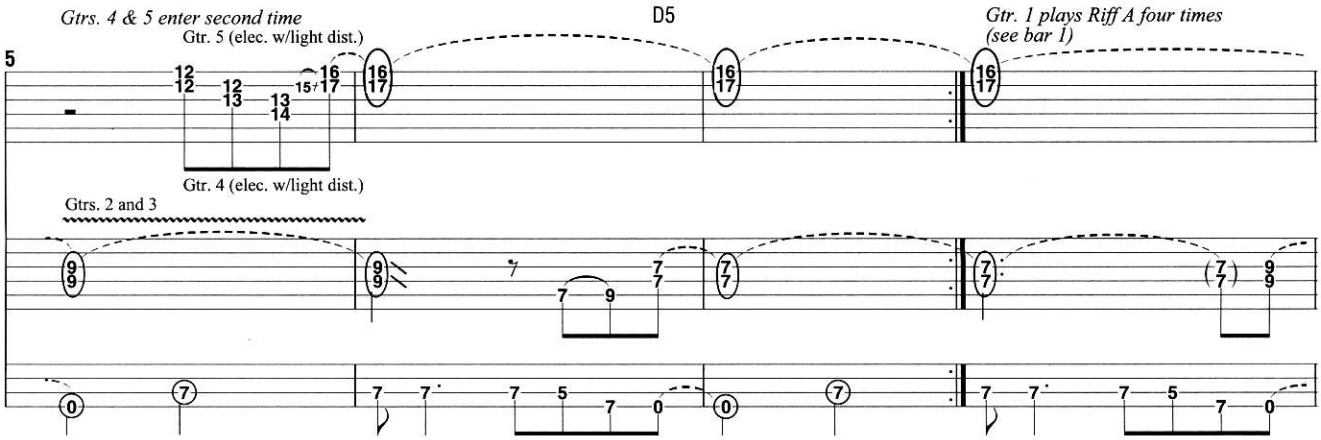
"FLIRTIN' WITH DISASTER" MOLLY HATCHET

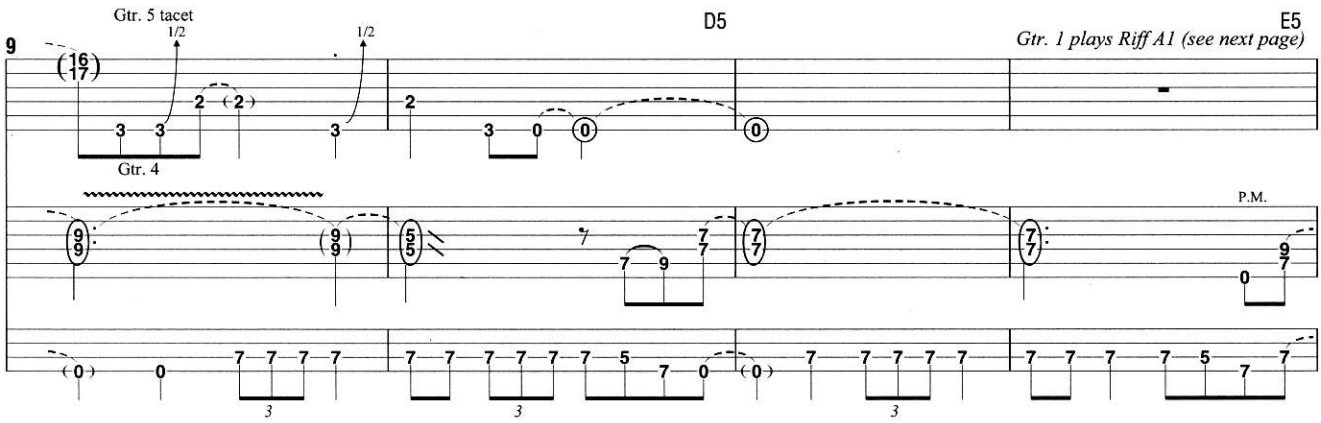
As heard on **FLIRTIN' WITH DISASTER** (EPIC)
Words and Music by **Hlubek, Thomas, Brown (Molly Hatchet)** ✶ *Transcribed by* **Andy Aledort and Jeff Perrin**



A Intro (0:00)
Fast ♩ = 176
Triplet Feel (♫ = ♩³♪)







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B **Verse** (0:27, 1:43)
(End half-time feel)
1. I'm travelin'
2. Speedin' down the fast

13 * Gtrs. 2 and 3 D5 C♯5 A5

P.M. P.M.

* Gtr. 1 buried in mix, doubles Gtrs. 2 and 3 simile.

Bass *Bass Fig. 1*

down the road an' I'm flirtin' with disaster
lane an' honey we're playin' from town to town

G5 A5

16 P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

end Bass Fig. 1

I got the pedal to the floor an' my life is runnin' faster
The boys an' I been burnin' it up can't seem to slow it down

G5 A5

19 P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

I'm outta money outta hope it looks like self-destruction
I got the pedal to the floor our lives are runnin' faster

Gtrs. 2 and 3 G5 A5

23 P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 15)

Riff A1 (0:23)
Gtr. 1

E5

"FLIRTIN' WITH DISASTER"

Well how much more can we take with all of this corruption
We got our sight set straight ahead but I ain't sure what we're after

G5 A5

Gtrs. 2 and 3

Gtrs. 2 and 3 substitute Rhy. Fill 1 second time (see below)

27

P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

Bass

C **Pre-Chorus** (0:49, 2:04, 4:08)

(take both endings on each pre-chorus)

1. We're flirtin' with disaster y'all know what I mean
   I don't know about yourself or what you wanna be yeah
2. We're flirtin' with disaster y'all damn sure know what I mean
   I don't know about yourself or what you plan to be yeah
3. We're flirtin' with disaster babe y'all know what I mean
   I don't know about yourself or what you plan to be

Bsus4 B Asus4 A B5

Gtrs. 4 and 5 play Fill 6 on 3rd Pre-Chorus

31

Bass Fig. 2

(repeat previous two bars) 2

1.

And the way we run our lives it makes no sense to me
You know the way we run our lives it makes no sense to me
You know the way we run our lives it makes no sense to me

Bsus4 B Asus4 A B5

Gtrs. 2 and 3

35

Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 twice (see bar 31)

2.

But when we gamble with our time we choose our destiny

Bsus4 B Asus4 A B5 B5

Gtrs. 2 and 3

39

Bass

Rhy. Fill 1 (2:03)
Gtrs. 2 and 3

A5 B5

Fill 6 (4:08)
Gtrs. 5 and 6

B5

Gtr. 4

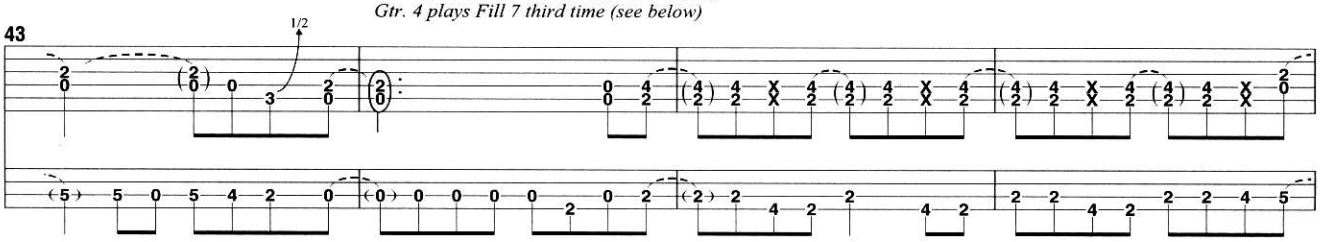
D **Chorus** (1:10, 2:25, 4:29)

1. I'm travelin' down that lonesome road
2. Yeah I'm travelin' down that lonesome road
3. Yeah I'm travelin' down this lonesome road

A5 B5 D5

Gtr. 4 plays Fill 1 first time (see below)
Gtr. 4 plays Fill 3 second time (see below)
Gtr. 4 plays Fill 7 third time (see below)

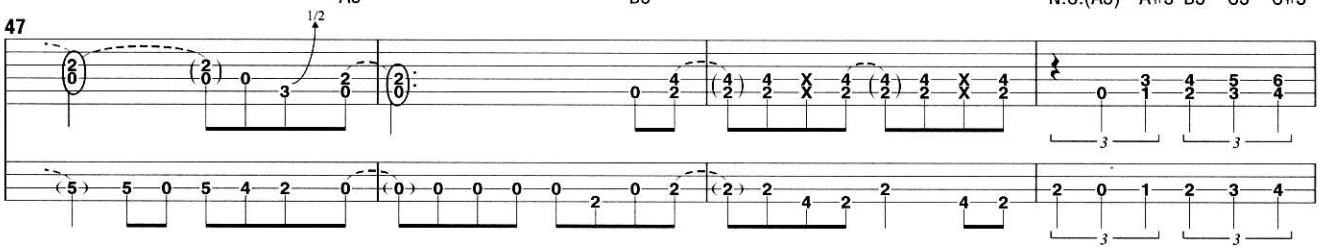
43



Feel like I'm draggin' a heavy load
Feel like I'm draggin' a heavy load
Feel like I'm draggin' a heavy load

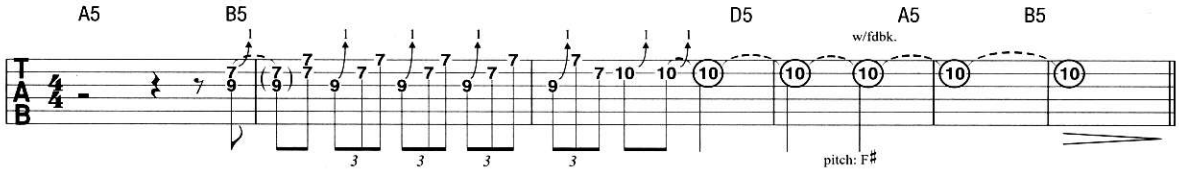
A5 B5 N.C.(A5) A♯5 B5 C5 C♯5

47



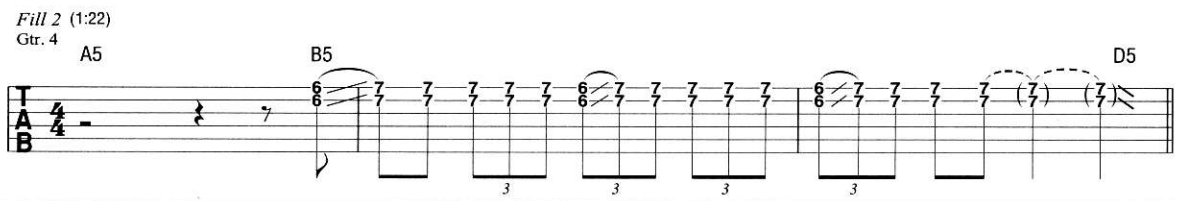
Fill 1 (1:12)
Gtr. 4

A5 B5 D5 A5 B5



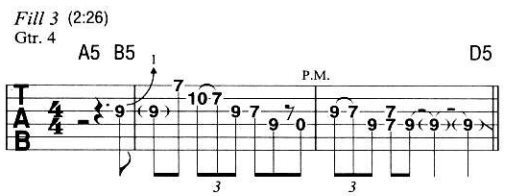
Fill 2 (1:22)
Gtr. 4

A5 B5 D5



Fill 3 (2:26)
Gtr. 4

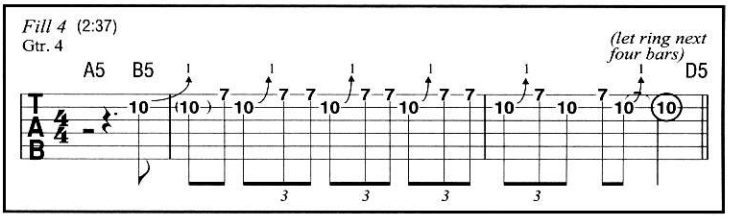
A5 B5 D5



Fill 4 (2:37)
Gtr. 4

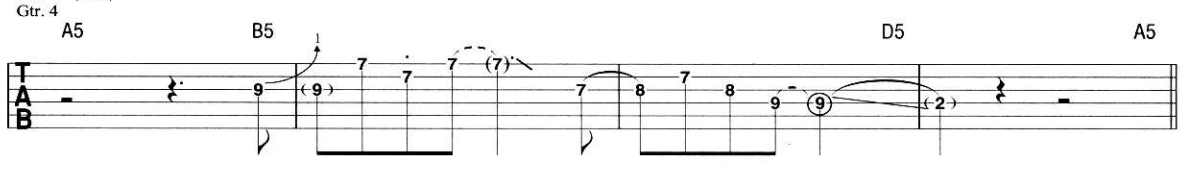
A5 B5 D5

(let ring next four bars)



Fill 7 (4:31)
Gtr. 4

A5 B5 D5 A5

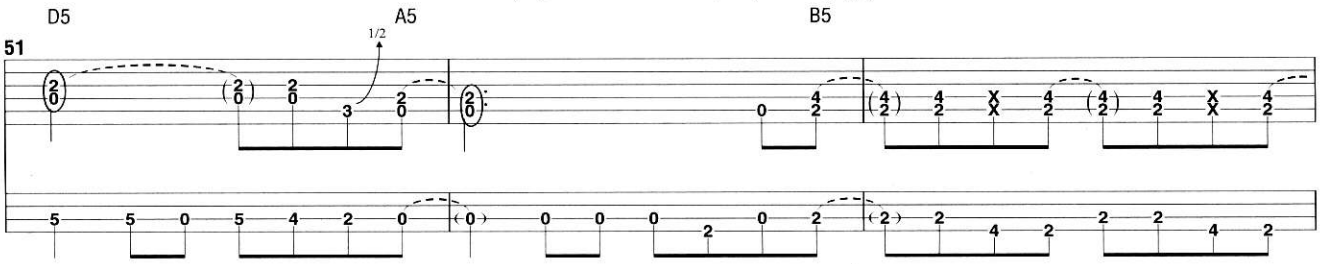


"FLIRTIN' WITH DISASTER"

3rd time, skip ahead to J

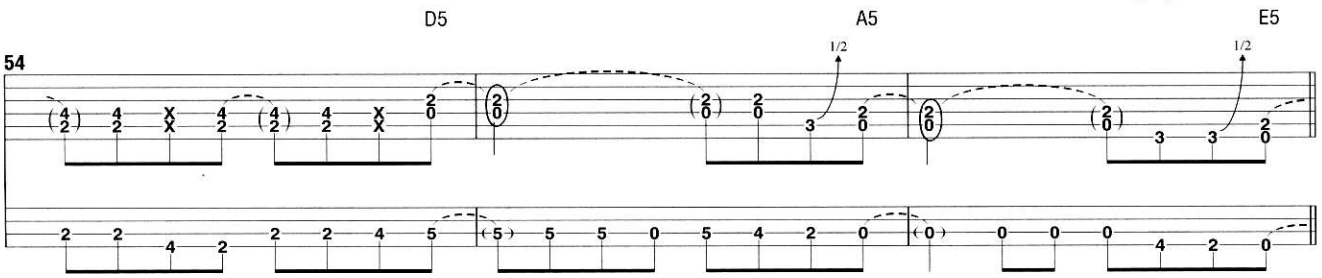
Yet I've tried to turn my head away
Though I try to turn my head away
Though I try to turn

Gtr. 4 plays Fill 2 first time (see previous page)
Gtr. 4 plays Fill 4 second time (see previous page)



2nd time, skip ahead to F

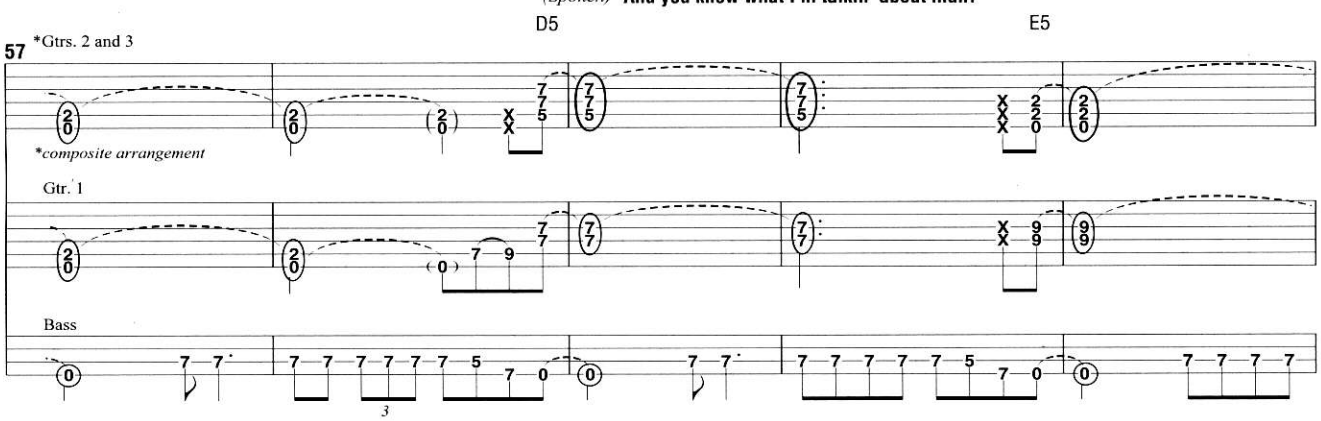
I'm Feel flirtin' about with the disaster same most every everyday day



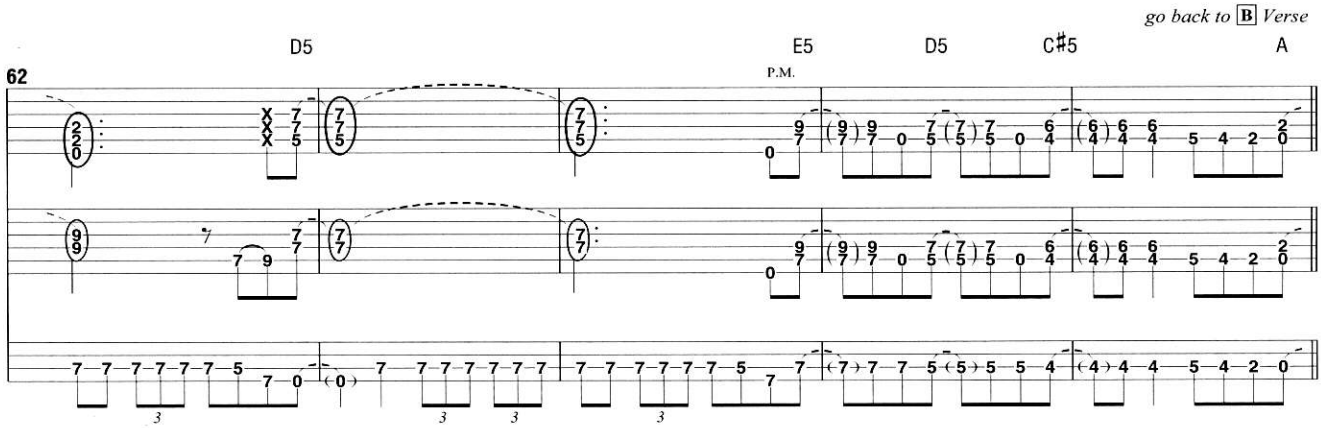
E (1:29)

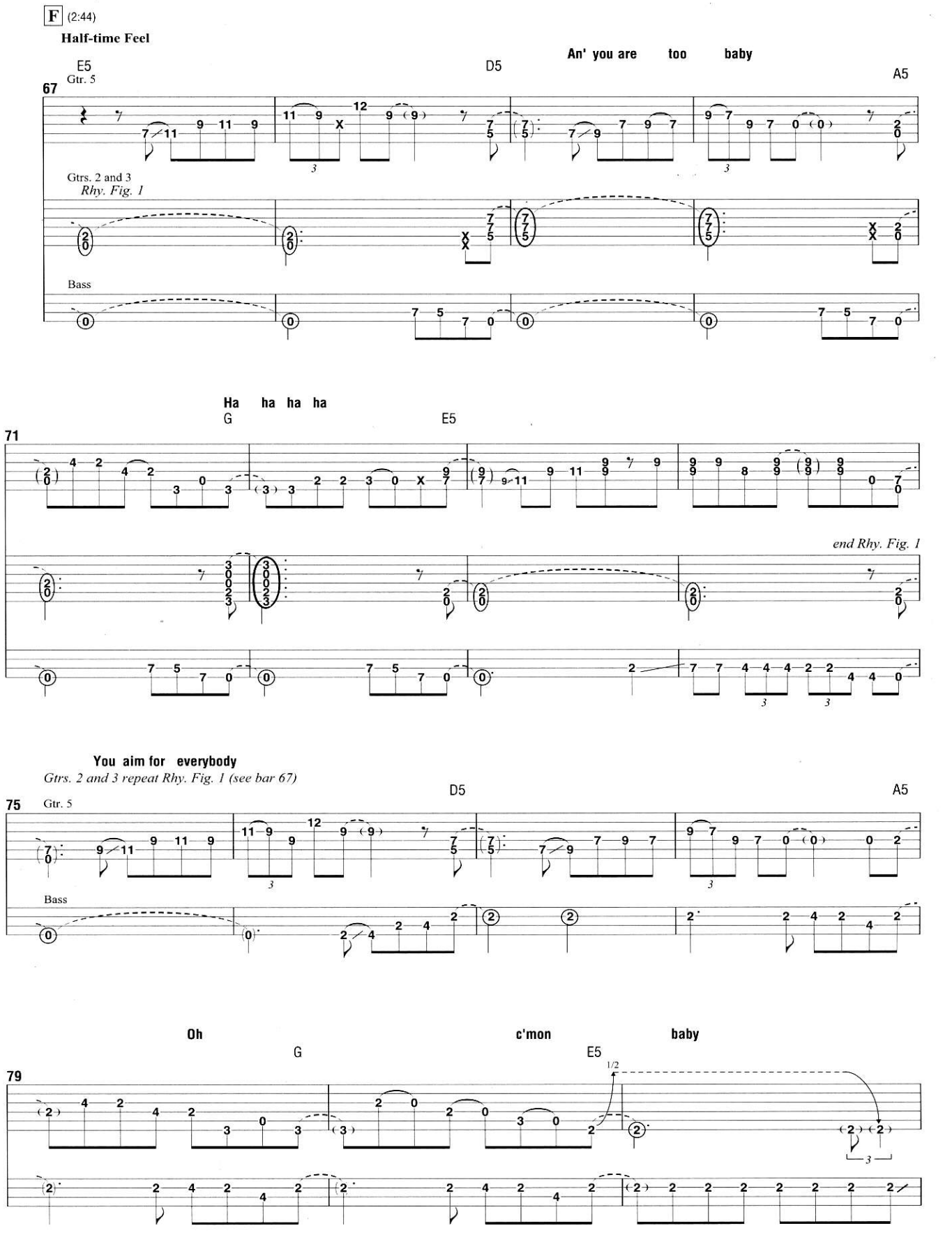
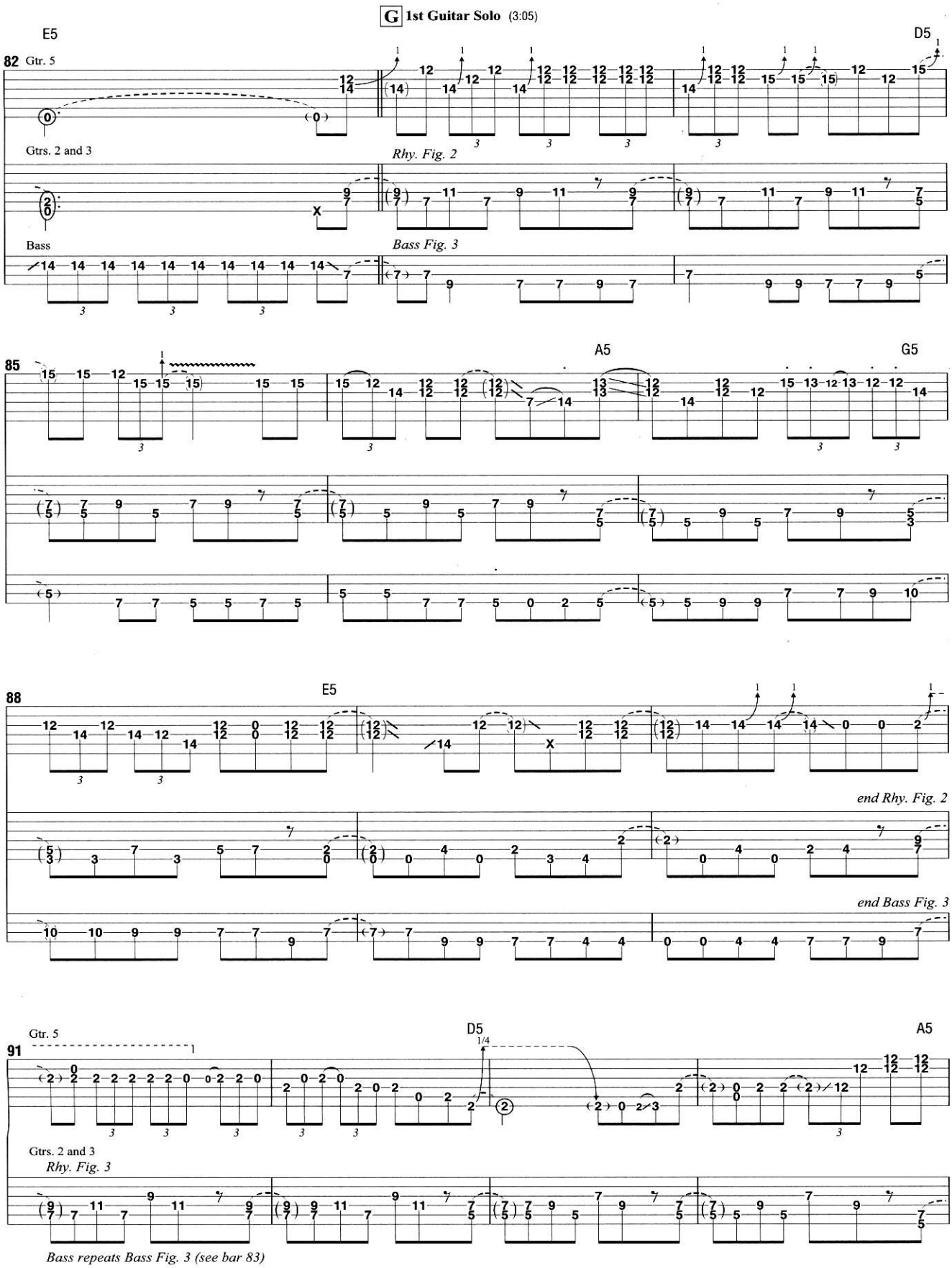
Half-time Feel

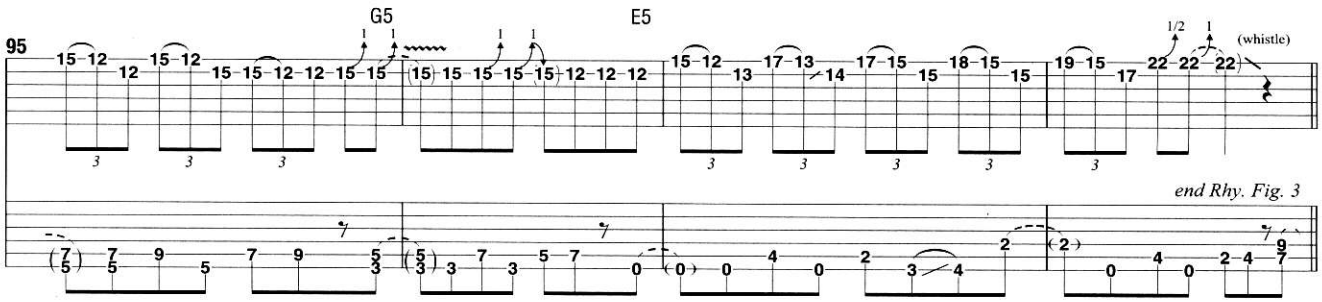
(Spoken) **And you know what I'm talkin' about man?**



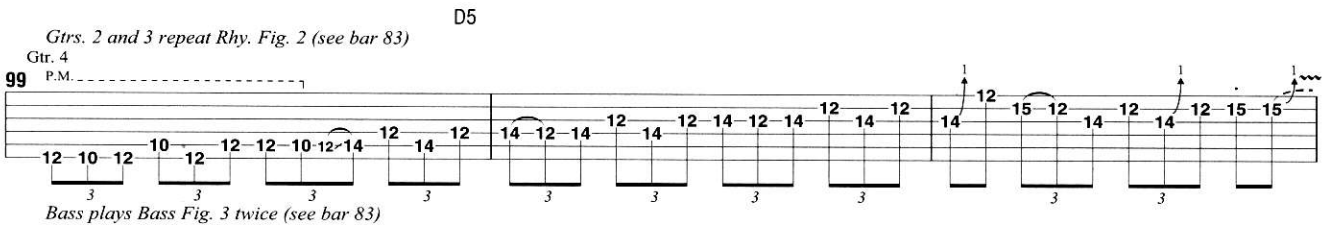
go back to B *Verse*

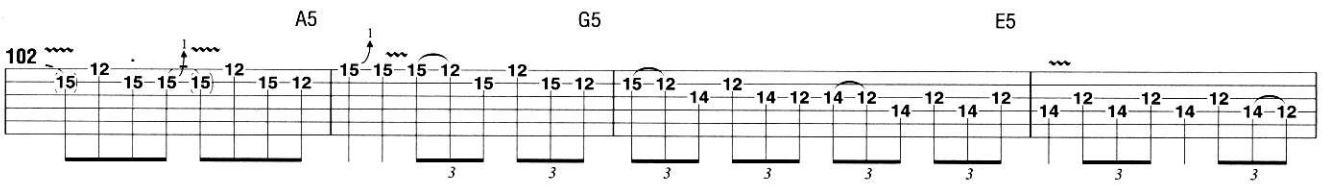


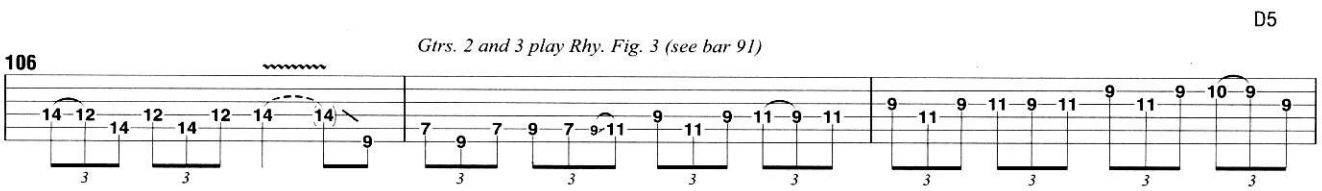

F (2:44)
Half-time Feel
E5
Gtr. 5
D5
An' you are too baby
A5
67
Gtrs. 2 and 3
Rhy. Fig. 1
Bass
Ha ha ha ha
G
E5
71
end Rhy. Fig. 1
You aim for everybody
Gtrs. 2 and 3 repeat Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 67)
D5
A5
75
Gtr. 5
Bass
Oh
G
c'mon
E5
baby
79
1/2

G 1st Guitar Solo (3:05)
E5
D5
82 Gtr. 5
Gtrs. 2 and 3
Rhy. Fig. 2
Bass
Bass Fig. 3
85
A5
G5
88
E5
end Rhy. Fig. 2
end Bass Fig. 3
91
Gtr. 5
D5
1/4
A5
Gtrs. 2 and 3
Rhy. Fig. 3
Bass repeats Bass Fig. 3 (see bar 83)

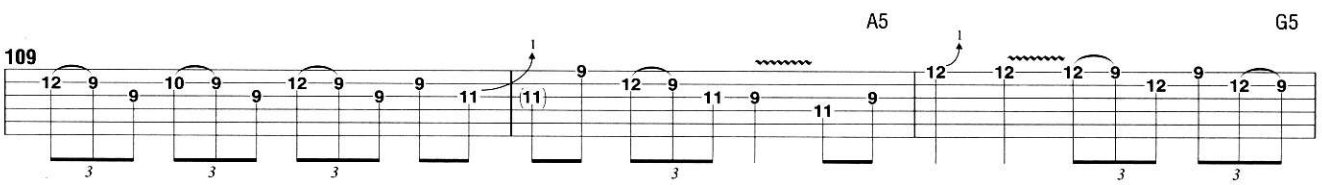


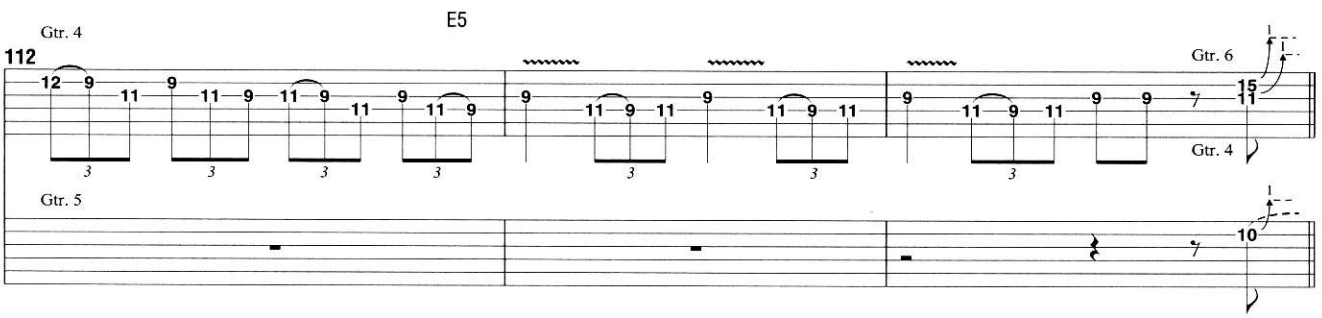
H **2nd Guitar Solo** (3:26)











"FLIRTIN' WITH DISASTER"

I Harmonized Lead Break (3:47)

E5 D5

Gtrs. 2 and 3 play Rhy. Fig. 3 (see bar 91

Gtr. 6

115

Gtr. 4

Gtr. 5

Bass

A5 G5 E5

Gtr. 1 substitutes Fill 5 second time

118

1. 2.

go back to C *Pre-Chorus*

B5

Gtrs. 2 and 3 substitute Rhy. Fill 2

121

Fill 5 (4:05)

Gtr. 1

G5 E5

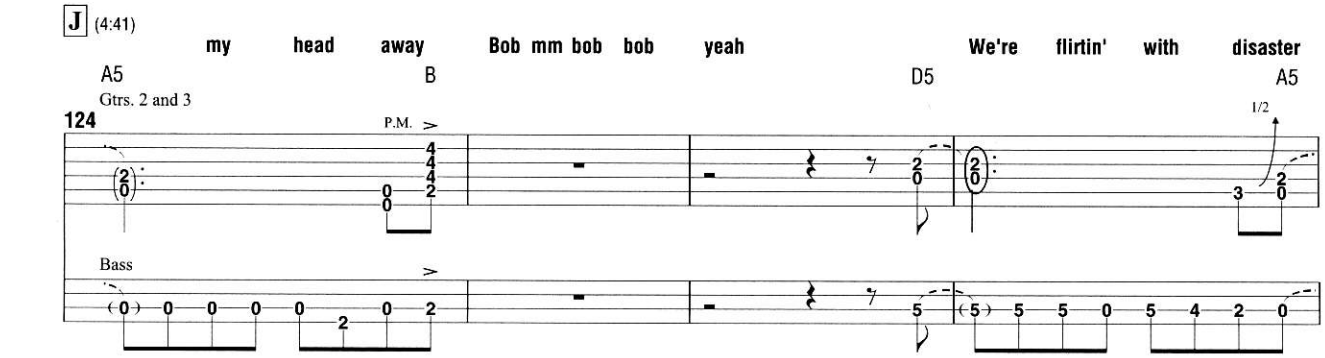
* pick scrape

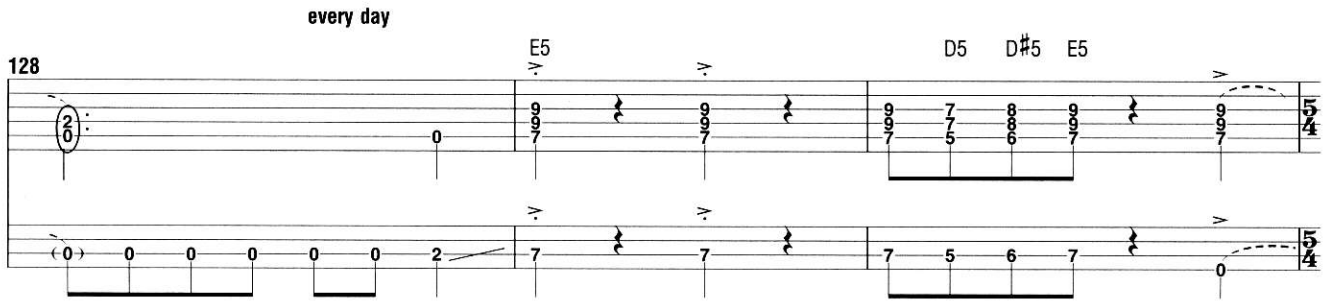
* *scrape pick back and forth across strings while sliding down neck.*

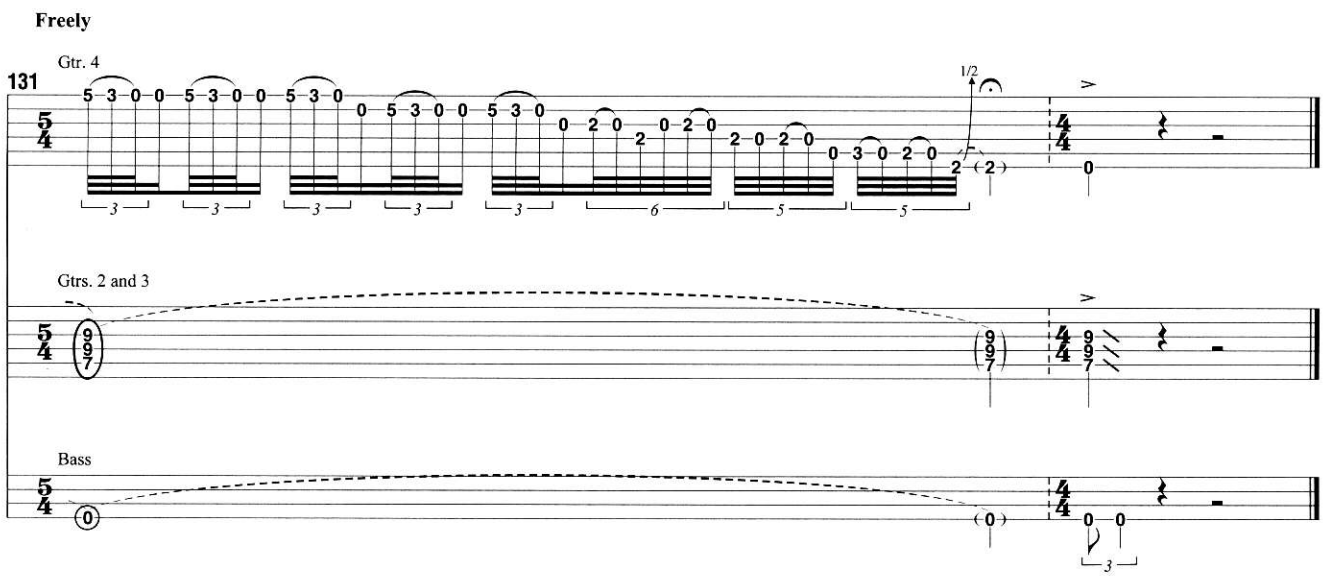
Rhy. Fill 2 (4:07)

Gtrs. 2 and 3

E5 B5


J (4:41)
my head away Bob mm bob bob yeah We're flirtin' with disaster
A5 B D5 A5
Gtrs. 2 and 3
124
P.M.
1/2
Bass


every day
128
E5 D5 D♯5 E5


Freely
Gtr. 4
131
1/2
Gtrs. 2 and 3
Bass

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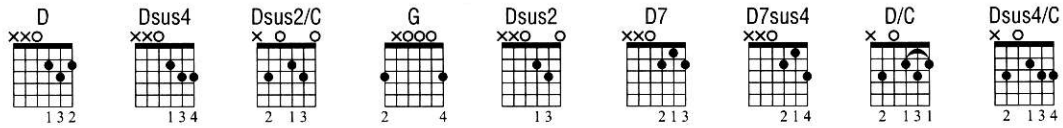
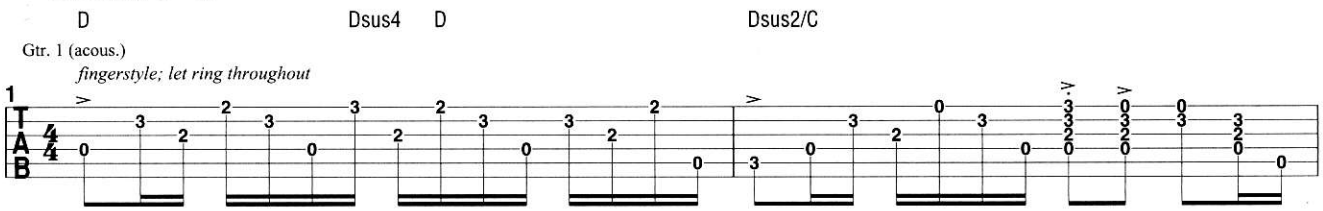
"CAN'T YOU SEE" THE MARSHALL TUCKER BAND

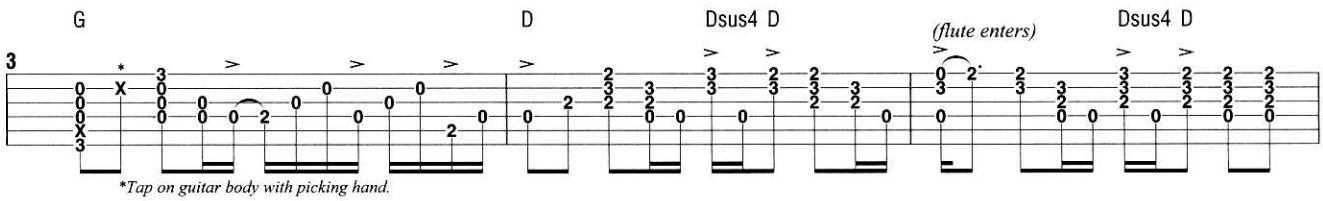
As heard on **THE MARSHALL TUCKER BAND** (AJK)
Words and Music by **Toy Caldwell** ✶ *Transcribed by* **Dave Whitehill and Jeff Perrin**

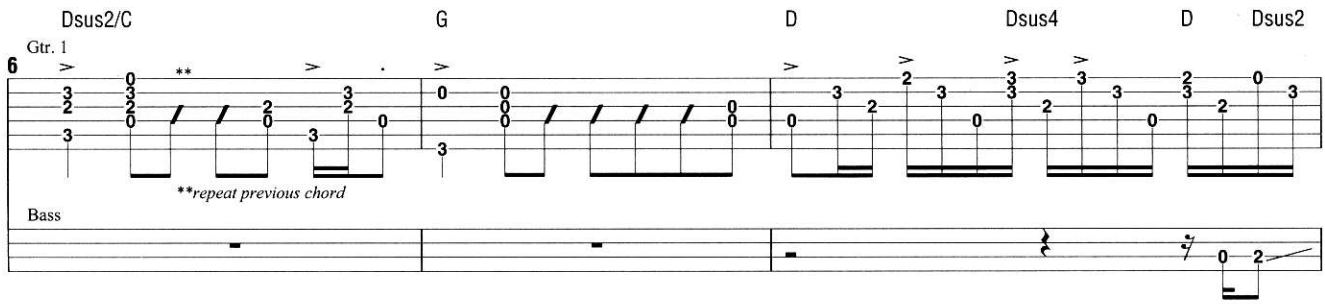


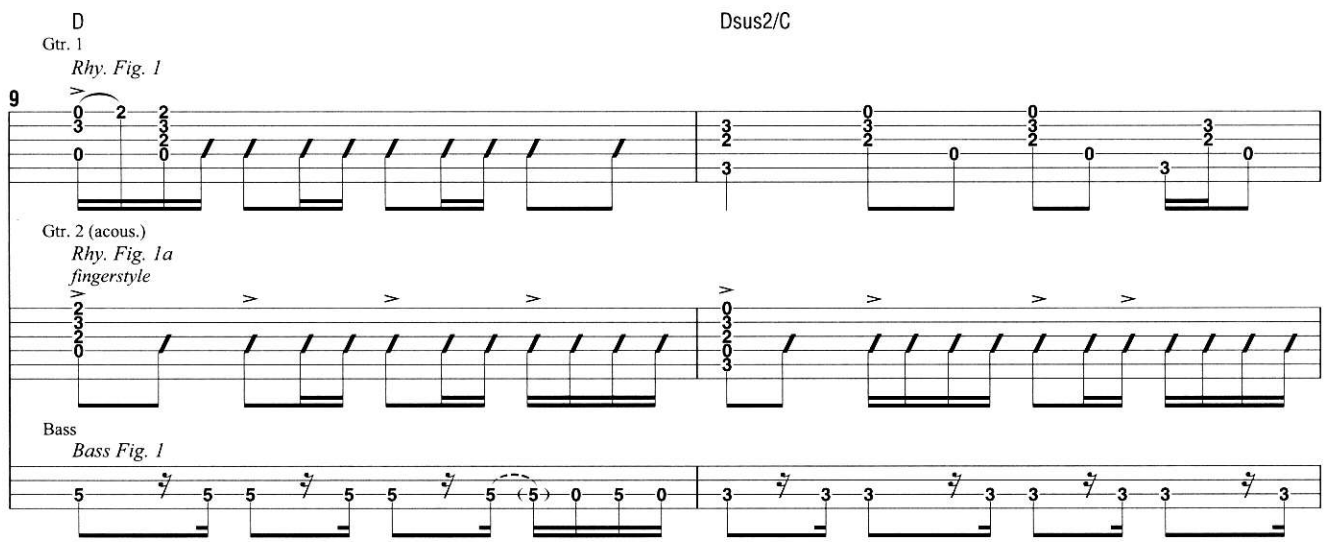
A **Intro** (0:00)

Moderately ♩ = 84









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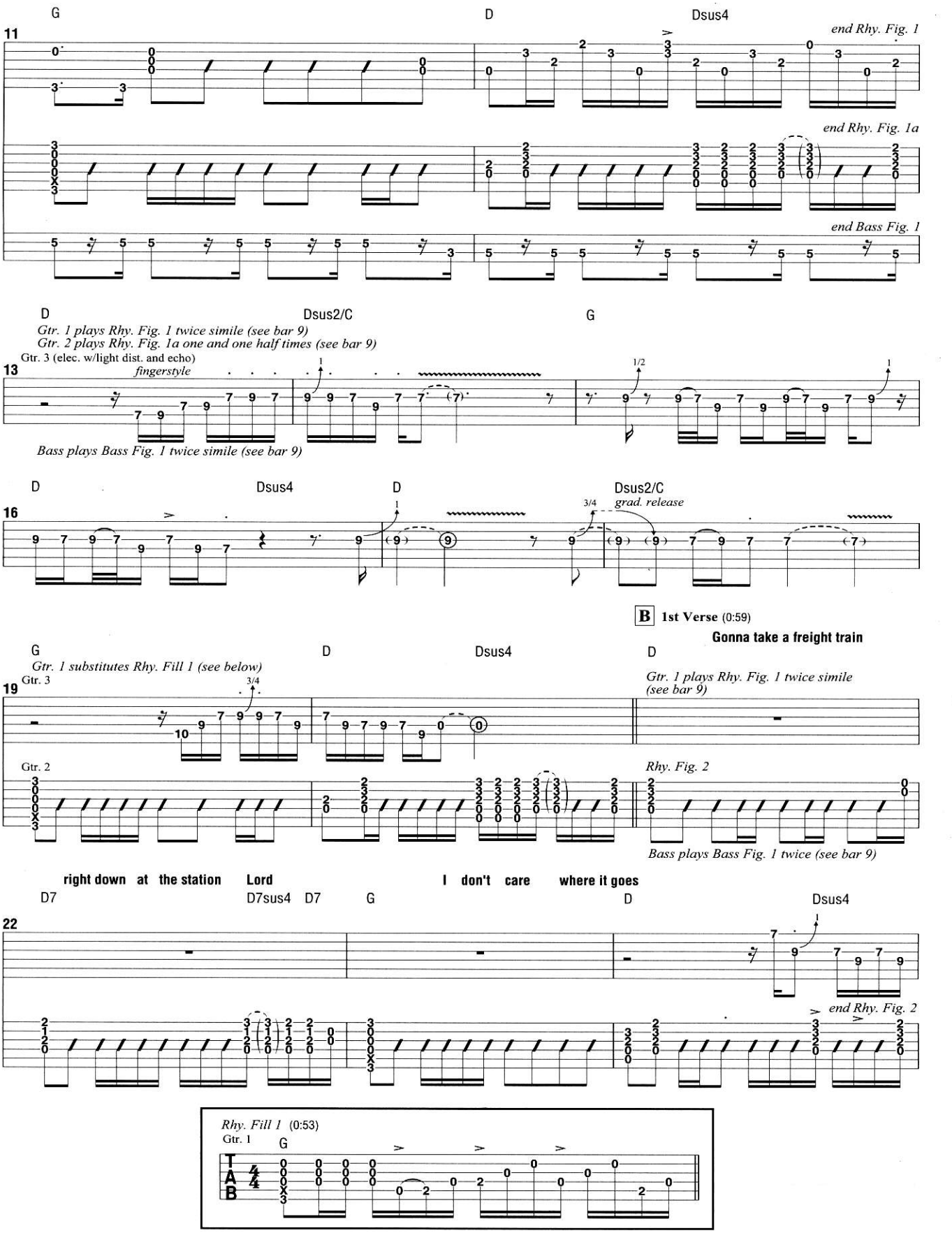

G
D
Dsus4
11
end Rhy. Fig. 1
end Rhy. Fig. 1a
end Bass Fig. 1
D
Dsus2/C
G
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 twice simile (see bar 9)
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1a one and one half times (see bar 9)
Gtr. 3 (elec. w/light dist. and echo)
fingerstyle
13
Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice simile (see bar 9)
D
Dsus4
D
Dsus2/C
16
3/4
grad. release
B 1st Verse (0:59)
Gonna take a freight train
G
D
Dsus4
D
Gtr. 1 substitutes Rhy. Fill 1 (see below)
Gtr. 3
19
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 twice simile (see bar 9)
Gtr. 2
Rhy. Fig. 2
Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice (see bar 9)
right down at the station Lord I don't care where it goes
D7
D7sus4
D7
G
D
Dsus4
22
end Rhy. Fig. 2
Rhy. Fill 1 (0:53)
Gtr. 1
G

"CAN'T YOU SEE"

Gonna climb a mountain the highest mountain I jump off nobody gonna know Can't you see

D D7 G D Dsus4

Gtr. 2 repeats Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 21)

Gtr. 3

25

C **1st Chorus** (1:23)

whoa can't you see what that woman Lord she been doin' to me Can't you see

D Dsus2/C G D Dsus4

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 twice simile (see bar 9)
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1a twice simile (see bar 9)

29

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice (see bar 9)

can't you see what that woman she been doin' to me

D Dsus2/C G D Dsus4

Gtr. 1 substitutes Rhy. Fill 2 (see below)

33

D **2nd Verse** (1:46)

I'm gonna find me a hole in the wall I'm gonna crawl inside and die

D D7 G D Dsus4

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 twice simile (see bar 9)
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 twice simile (see bar 21)

37

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice (see bar 9)

Come later now a mean old woman Lord never told me goodbye Can't you see

D D7 G D

41

E **2nd Chorus** (2:10)

oh can't you see what that woman Lord she been doin' to me Can't you see

D Dsus2/C G D

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 twice simile (see bar 9)
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1a twice simile (see bar 9)

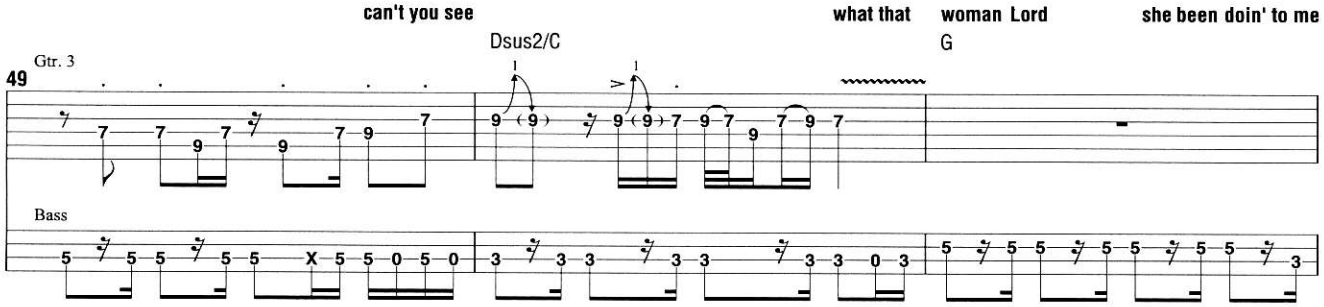
45

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 9)

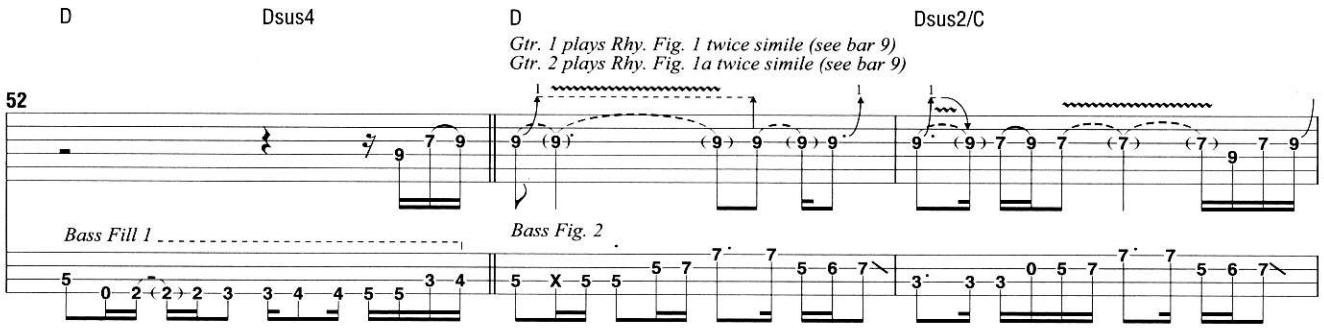
Rhy. Fill 2 (1:40)

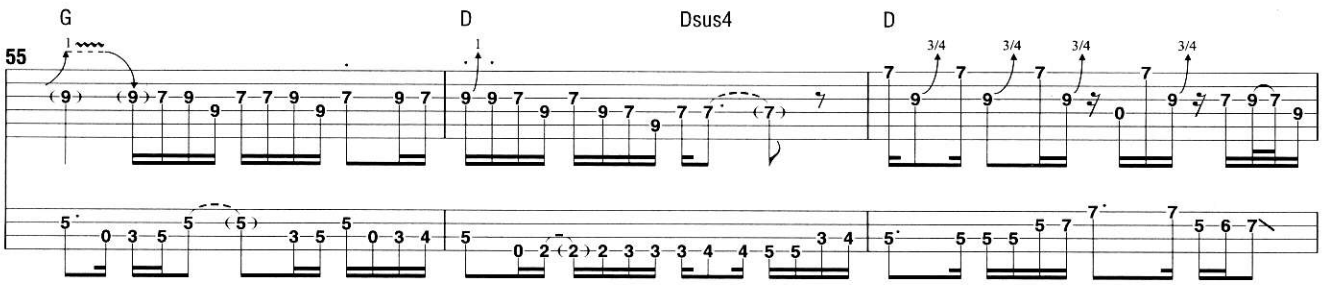
Gtr. 1

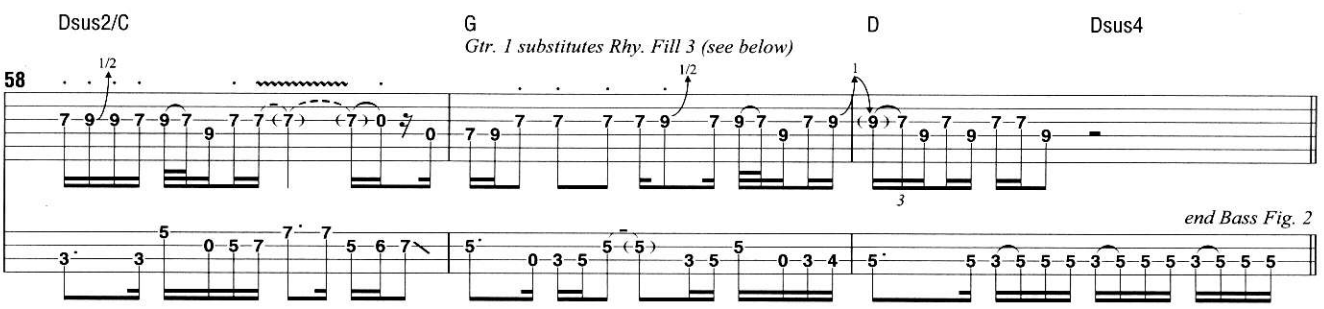
G (D) Dsus4 D

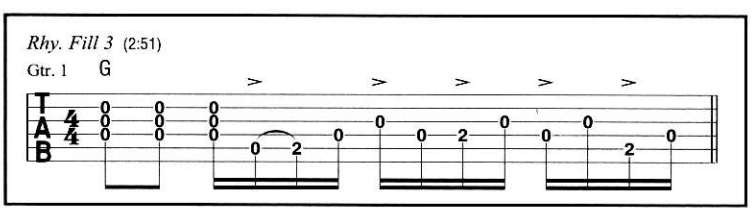


F **1st Guitar Solo** (2:33)









G **3rd Verse** (2:56)

I'm gonna buy a ticket now as far as I can Ain't-a never comin' back

D D7 D7sus4 D7 G D

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 twice simile (see bar 9)
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 twice simile (see bar 21)

Gtr. 3

61

grad. release

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice simile (see bar 9)

Grab me a southbound all the way to Georgia now 'til the train it run out of track Can't you see

D7 G D

65

H **3rd Chorus** (3:20)

whoa can't you see what that woman Lord she been doin' to me Can't you see

D Dsus4 D Dsus2/C G D Dsus4 D

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1a twice simile (see bar 9)

Gtr. 3

69

Gtr. 1

Rhy. Fig. 3 *end Rhy. Fig. 3*

Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 twice simile (see bar 9)

can't you see what that woman she been doin' to me (oh Lord)

Dsus4 D Dsus2/C G D Dsus4 D

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 simile (see bar 9)

Gtr. 3

73

Bass substitutes Bass Fill 1 simile (see bar 52)

I **2nd Guitar Solo** (3:44)

Dsus4 D Dsus4 D Dsus2/C

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1a twice simile (see bar 9)

Gtr. 3

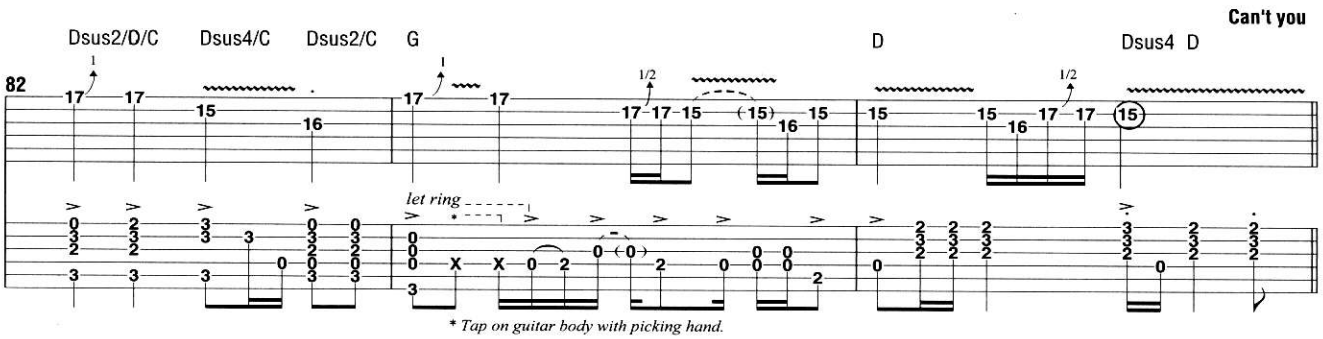
77

Gtr. 1

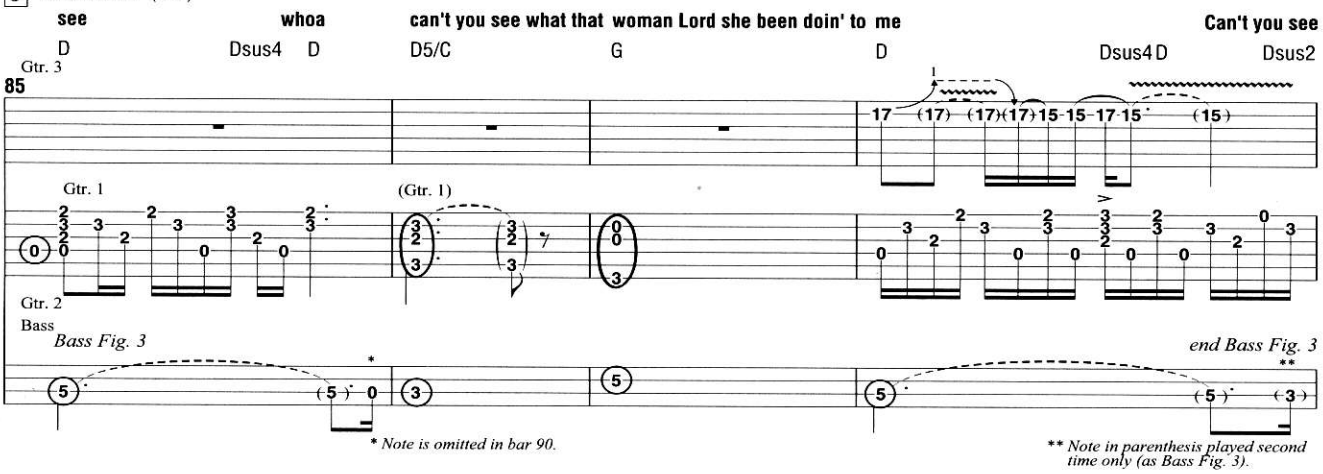
Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 simile (see bar 53)

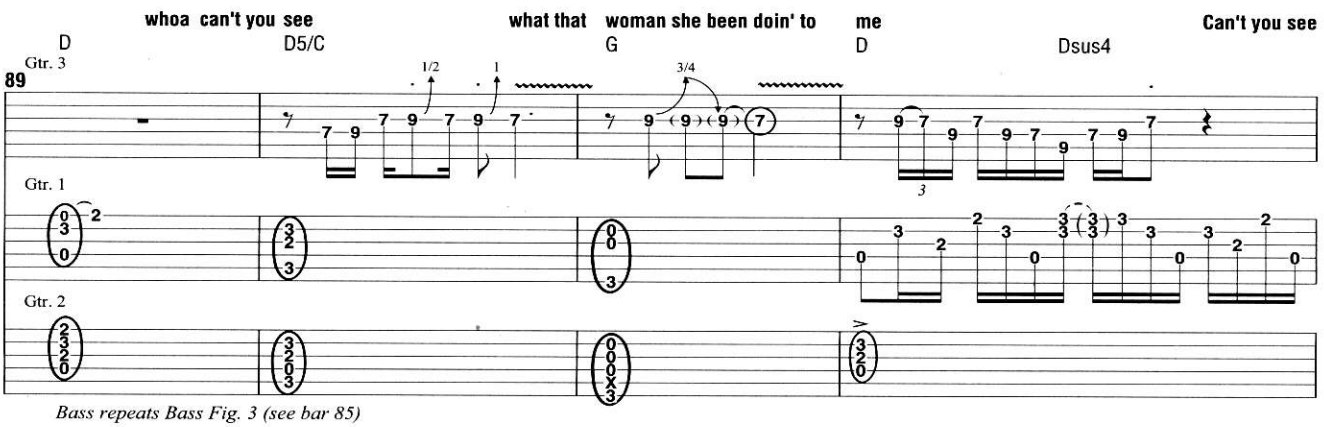
G D Dsus4 D Dsus4 D Dsus2 D

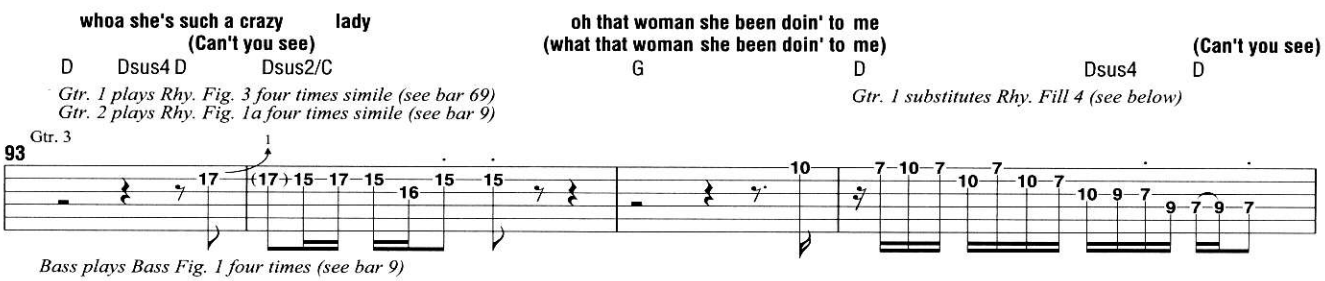
79

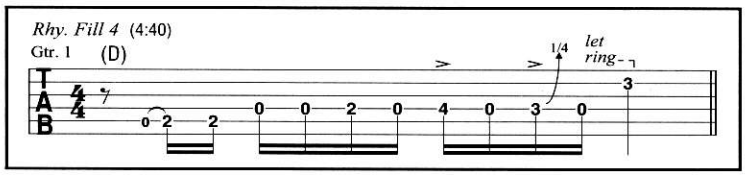


J **4th Chorus** (4:07)









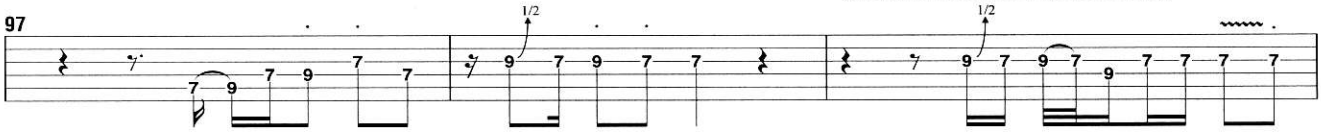
"CAN'T YOU SEE"

Lord I can't stand it no more (Can't you see) oh (what that woman) she been doin' to me (she been doin' to me)

D Dsus4 D Dsus2/C G

Gtr. 1 substitutes Rhy. Fill 5 (see below)

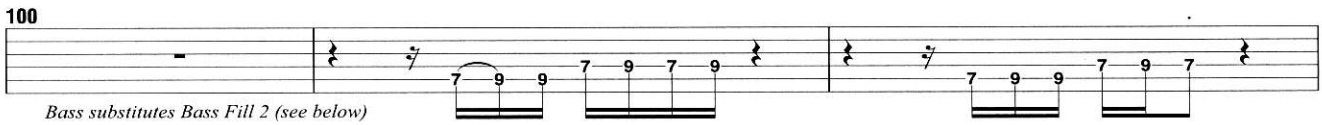
97



I'm gonna take a freight train (Can't you see) right down at the station (can't you see) Lord (what that

D Dsus4 D Dsus4 D Dsus2/C

100

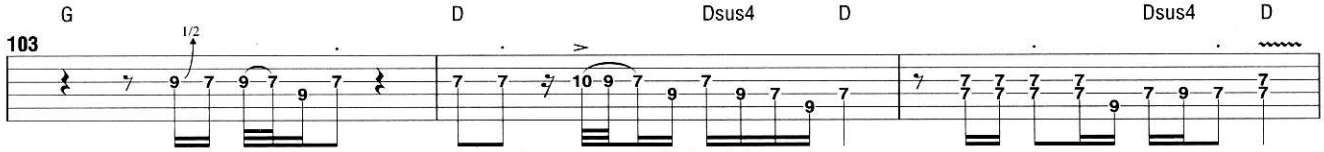


Bass substitutes Bass Fill 2 (see below)

Ain't never comin' back whoa Lord (she been doin' to me) Gonna ride me a southbound (Can't you see) (can't you see) woman)

G D Dsus4 D Dsus4 D

103



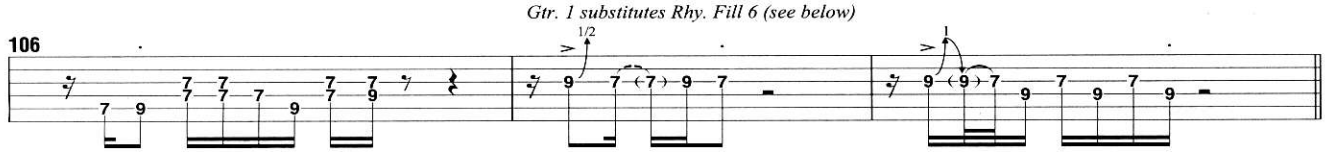
Bass substitutes Bass Fill 2 (see below)

all the way to Georgia Lord (what that woman) 'til the train it run outta track (she been doin' to me) oh Lord

Dsus2/C G D Dsus4 D

Gtr. 1 substitutes Rhy. Fill 6 (see below)

106



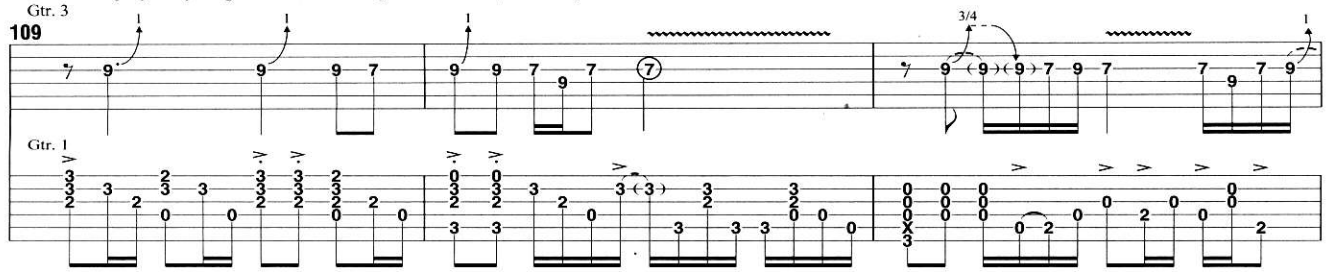
K **3rd Guitar Solo** (5:17)

Dsus4 D Dsus4 D Dsus2/C G

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1a one and a half times simile (see bar 9)

Gtr. 3

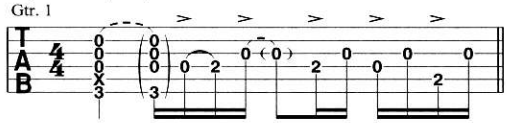
109



Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 simile (see bar 53)

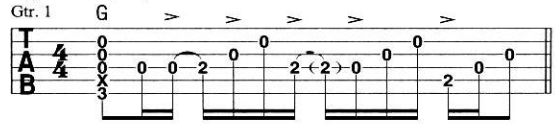
Rhy. Fill 5 (4:49)

Gtr. 1



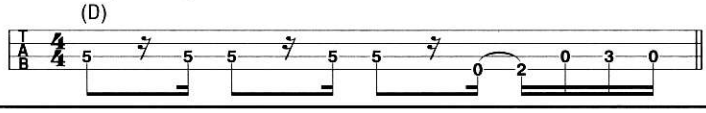
Rhy. Fill 6 (5:12)

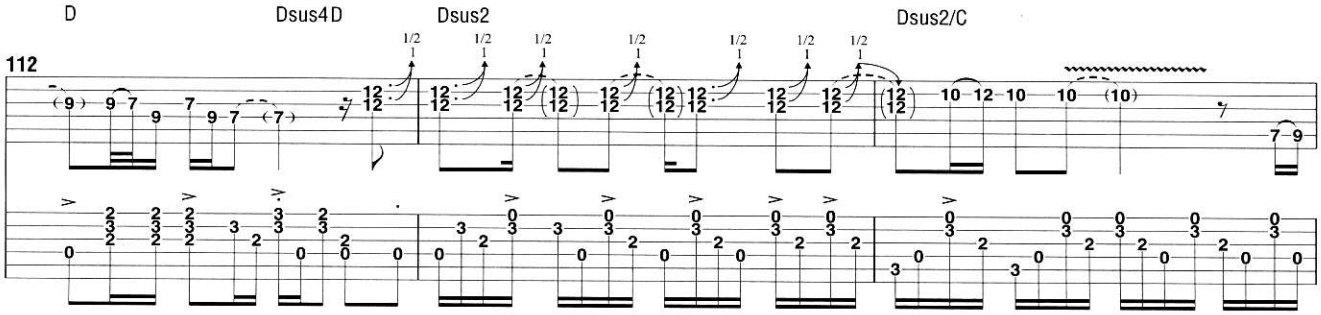
Gtr. 1 G

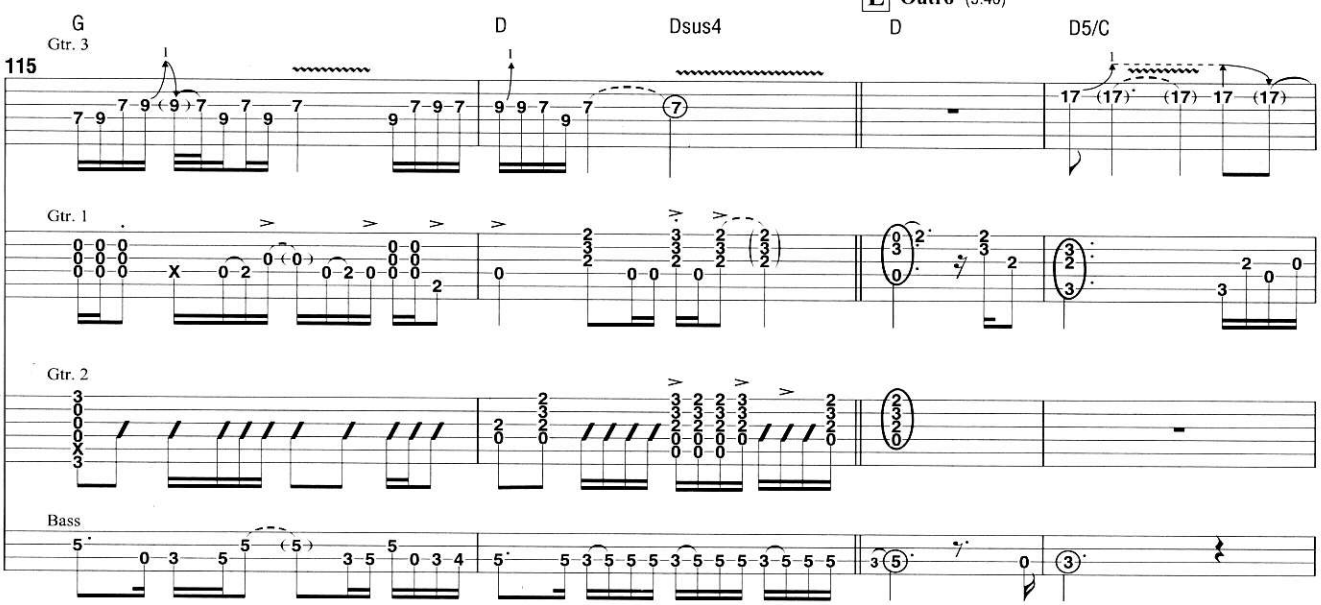


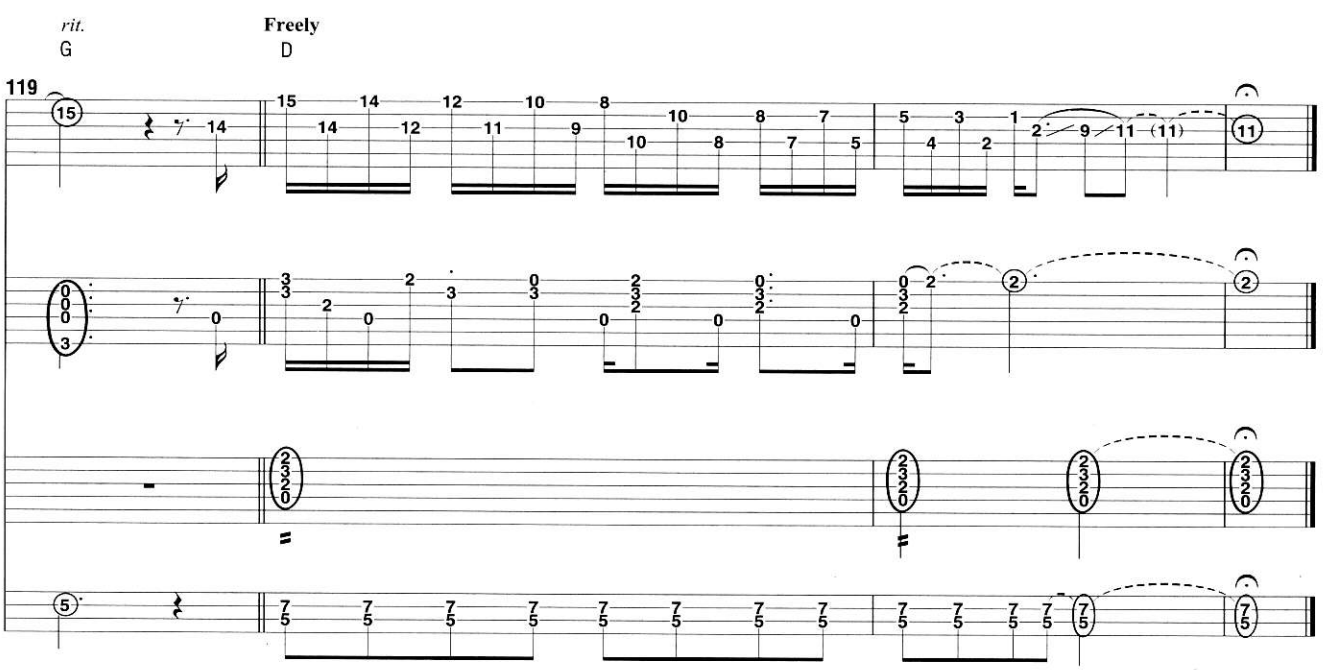
Bass Fill 2 (4:52, 5:03)

(D)




D
Dsus4D
Dsus2
Dsus2/C
112


L Outro (5:40)
G
D
Dsus4
D
D5/C
115
Gtr. 3
Gtr. 1
Gtr. 2
Bass


rit.
Freely
G
D
119

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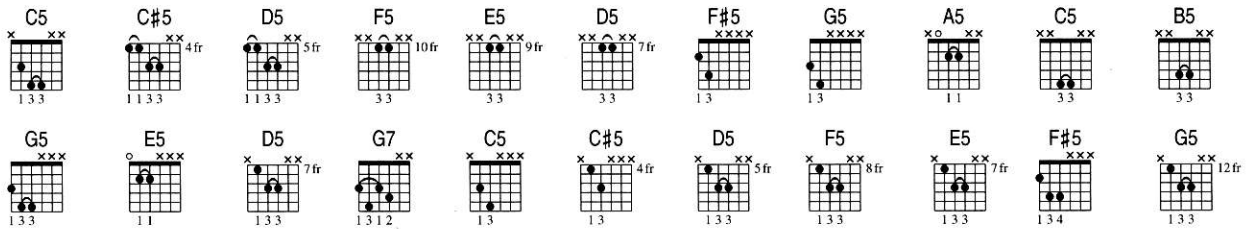
"WHAT'S YOUR NAME" LYNYRD SKYNYRD

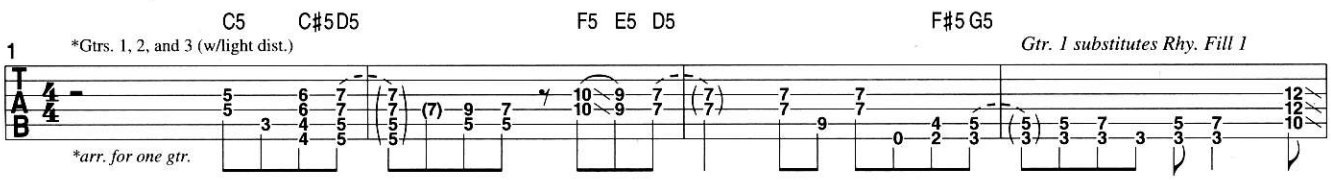
As heard on **STREET SURVIVORS** (MCA)

Words and Music by **Gary Rossington and Ronnie Van Zant** ✶ *Transcribed by* **Chris Amelar and Michael DuClos**



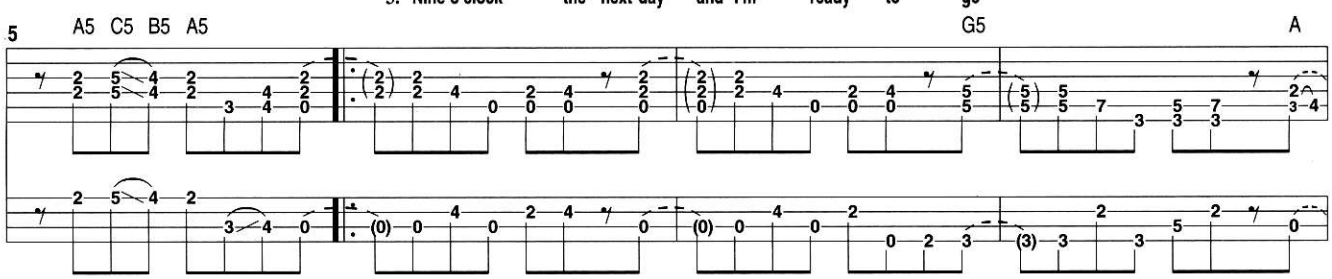
A **Intro** (0:00)

Moderately ♩ = 136

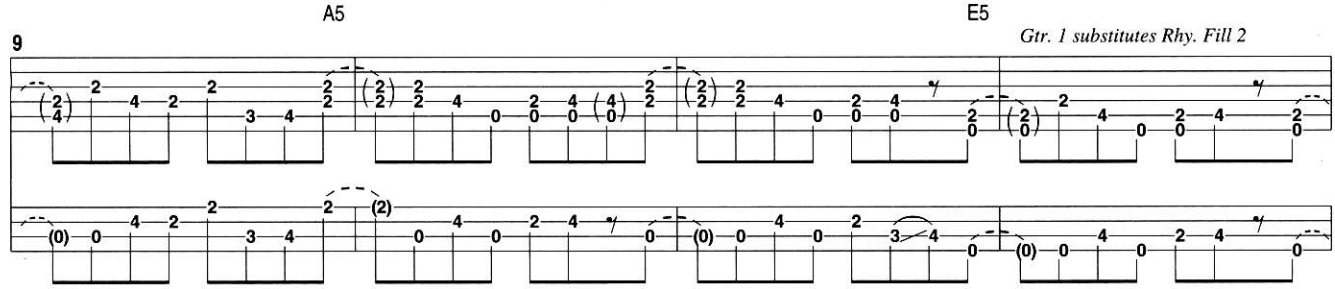


B **Verse** (0:08, 0:50, 2:29)

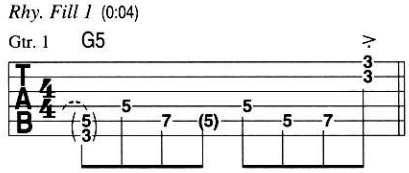
1. Well it's eight o'clock in Boise Idaho
2. Back at the hotel lord we got such a mess
3. Nine o'clock the next day and I'm ready to go



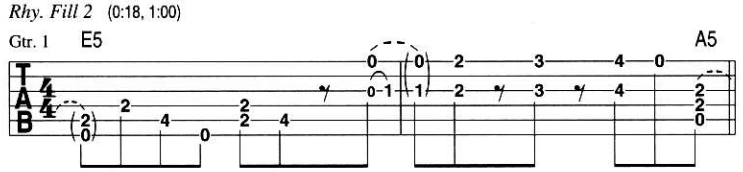
I found my Limo driver Mister take us to the show
It seems that one of the crew had a go with one of the guests Ah yes
I got six hundred miles to ride to do one more show Oh no



Rhy. Fill 1 (0:04)



Rhy. Fill 2 (0:18, 1:00)



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I done made some plans for later on tonight
Well the police said we can't drink in the bar what a shame
Can I get you a taxi home It sure was grand

13 A5 G5 D5

I'll find a little queen and I know I can treat her right
Won't ya' come up stairs girl and have a drink of champagne
When I come back here next year I wanna see you again

G5 A E5 A5

Piano plays Fill 1 first time
Horns play Fill 6 third time

17

C Chorus (0:36, 1:18, 2:15, 2:57)

What's your name
What's your name
What wasyour name

little girl

What's your name

Shouldn't you stay

C5 C♯5 D5 F5 E5 D5 F♯5 G5

Gtr. 1 substitutes Rhy. Fill 3
Piano plays Fill 2 first two times

C5 C♯5 D5

21

little girl
little girl

won't you do the same
for there ain't no

1., 3. *go back to* **B** *Verse*

F5 E5 D5 F♯5 G5 A5 C5 B5 A5

26

Horns play Fill 3 first time (see next page)

Fill 1 (0:33)
Piano arr. for gtr.
(A)

Fill 2 (0:39, 1:22)
Piano arr. for gtr.
(G)

Fill 6 (2:54)
Horns arr. for gtr.
(A)

Rhy. Fill 3 (0:39, 1:24, 2:19, 3:01)
Gtr. 1
G5 C5 C♯5 D5

"WHAT'S YOUR NAME"

2. 4.

30 What's your name little girl what's your name
(on 4th chorus only) (What was your name)
G7 C5 C♯5 D5 F5 E5 D5 F♯5 G5

2nd time, skip ahead to E

34 *Piano plays Fill 4* Shouldn't you stay little girl won't you do the same
C5 C♯5 D5 F5 E5 D5 F♯5 G5

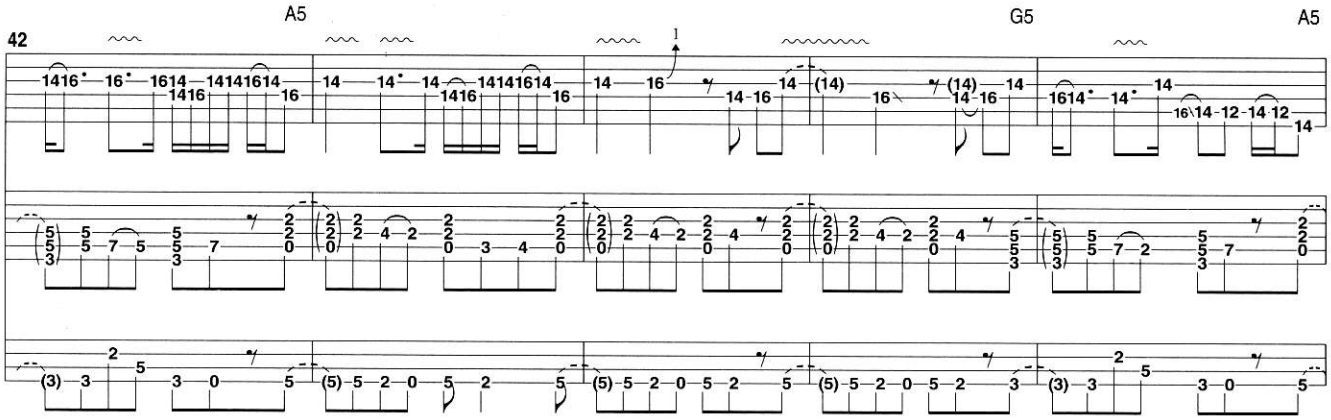
D **Guitar Solo** (1:46)

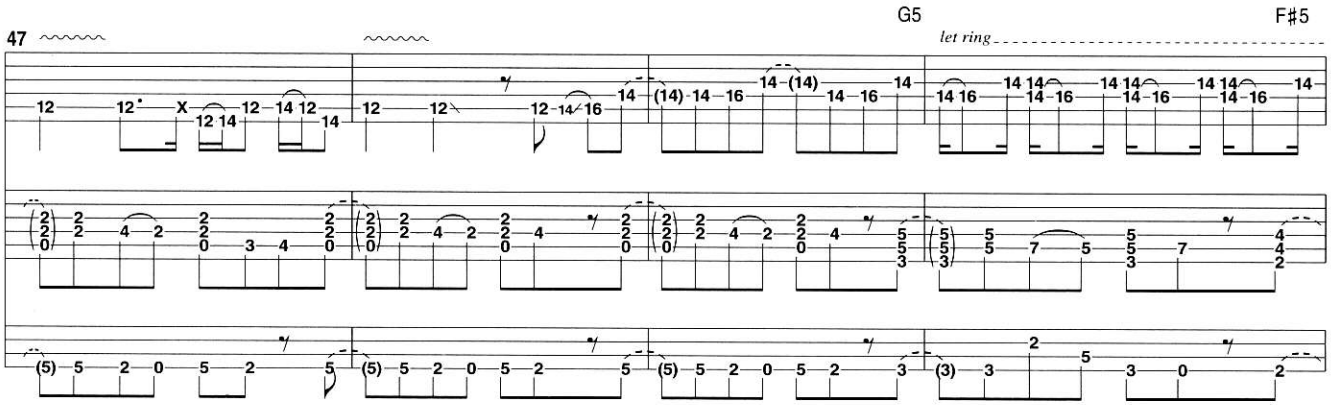
38 *Horns play Fill 5* G7 A5 *let ring* G5
Gtr. 2 (w/dist.)
Gtr. 1
Bass

Fill 4 (1:36)
Piano arr. for gtr.
(G)

Fill 3 (0:46)
Horns arr. for gtr.
(D) (G)

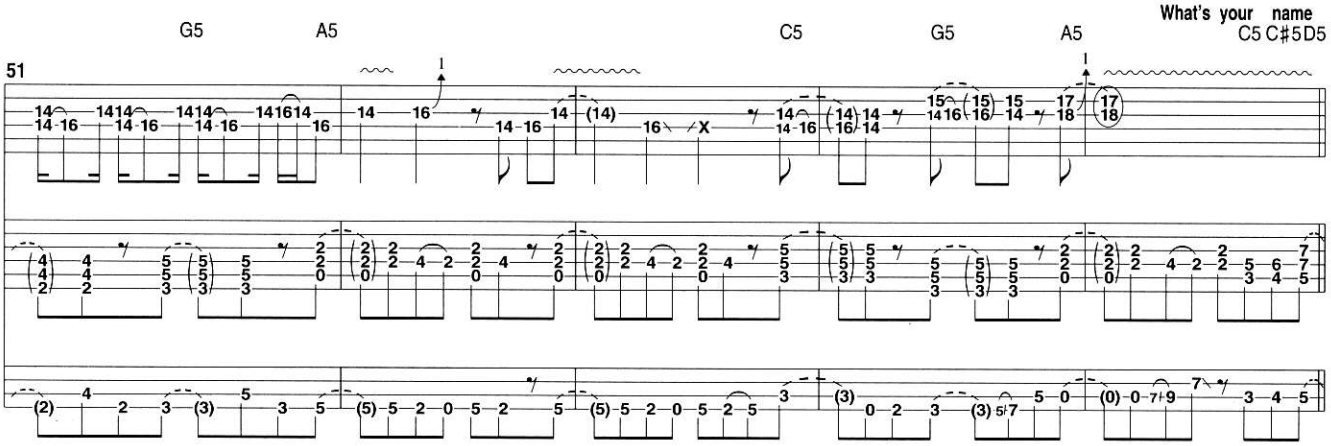
Fill 5 (1:43)
Horns arr. for gtr.
(G)





go back to C *Chorus*

What's your name



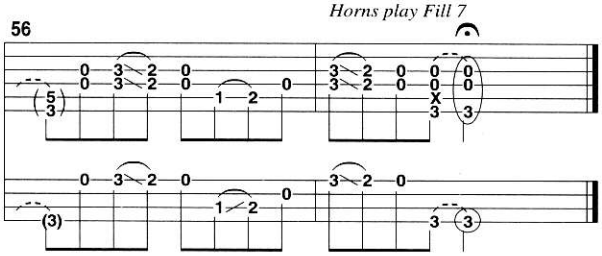
E (3:22)

G5 B♭5 A5 G5

Whew

B♭5 A5 G5

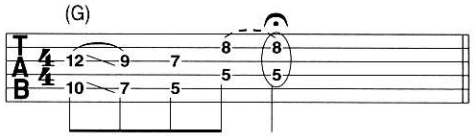
Horns play Fill 7



Fill 7 (3:24)

Horns arr. for gtr.

(G)



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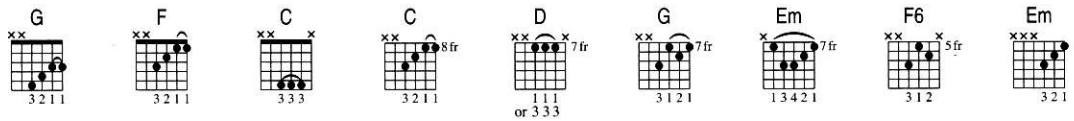
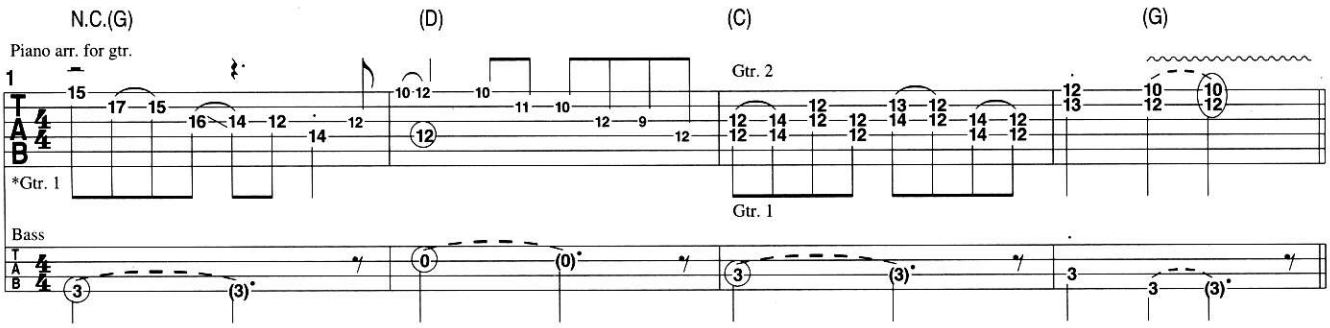
"RAMBLIN' MAN" THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND

As heard on **BROTHERS AND SISTERS** (POLYDOR)
Words and Music by **Dickey Betts** ✶ *Transcribed by* **Dave Whitehill**



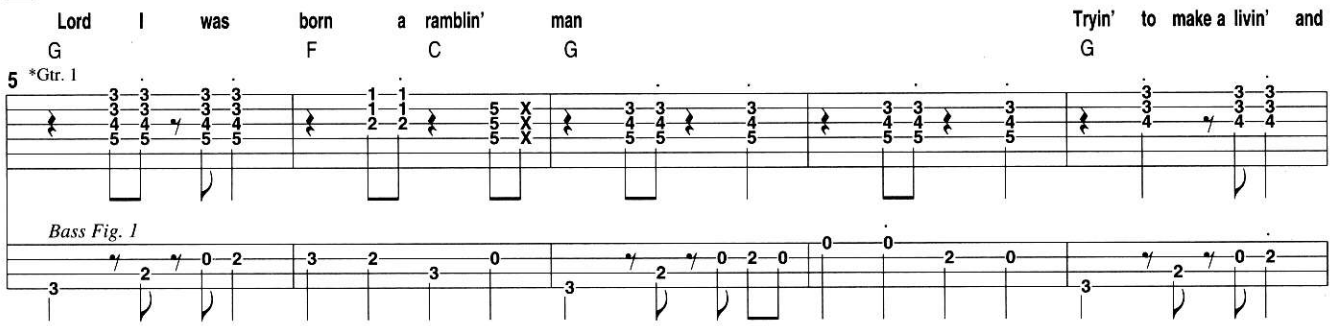
A **Intro** (0:00)

Fast Rock ♩ = 184

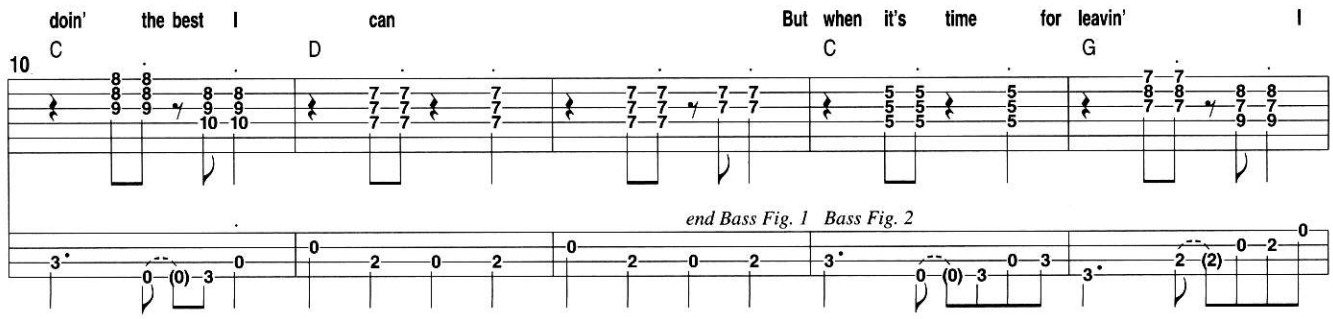


**All gtrs. are elec. w/light dist.*

B **1st Chorus** (0:05)



**Guitar's volume control turned lower for chord playing*



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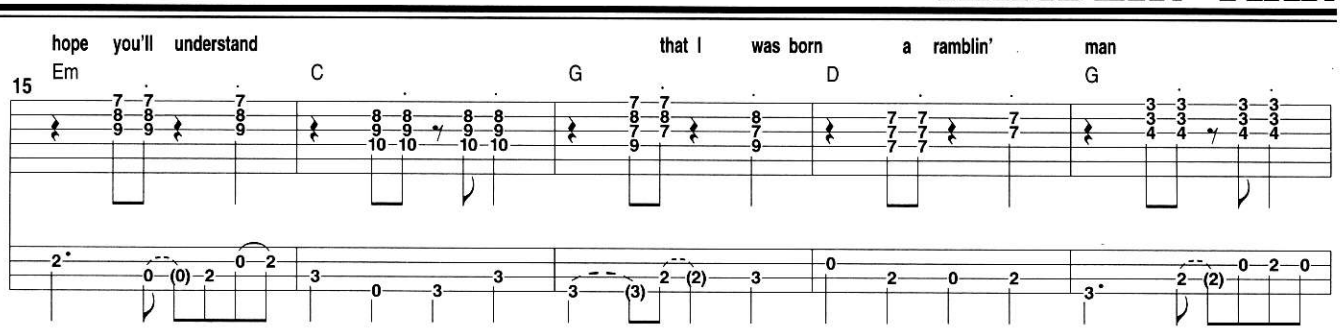
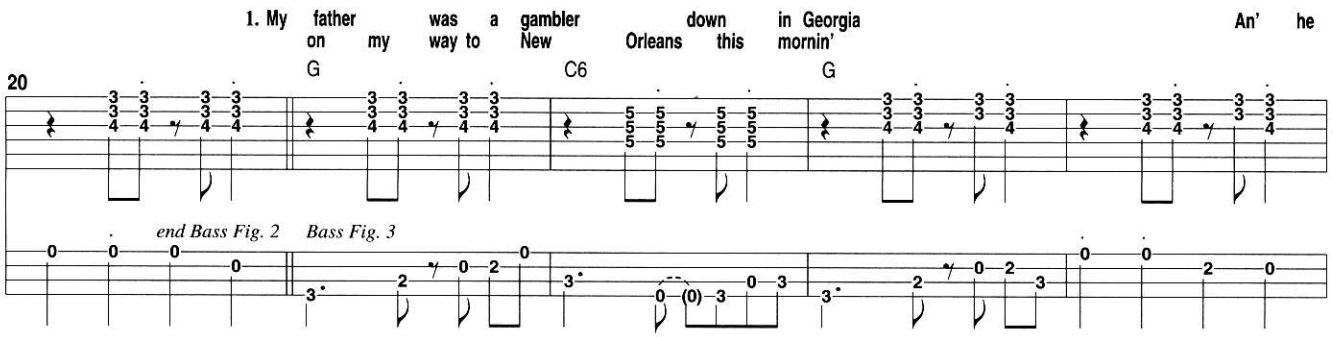
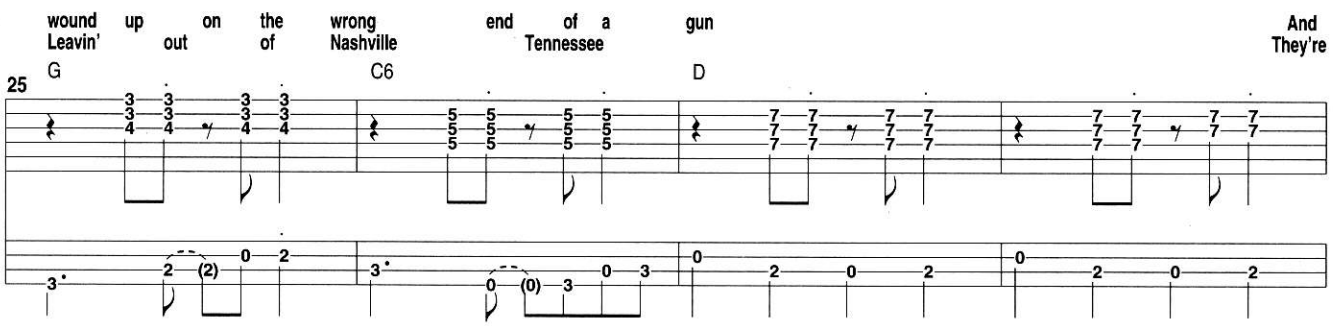
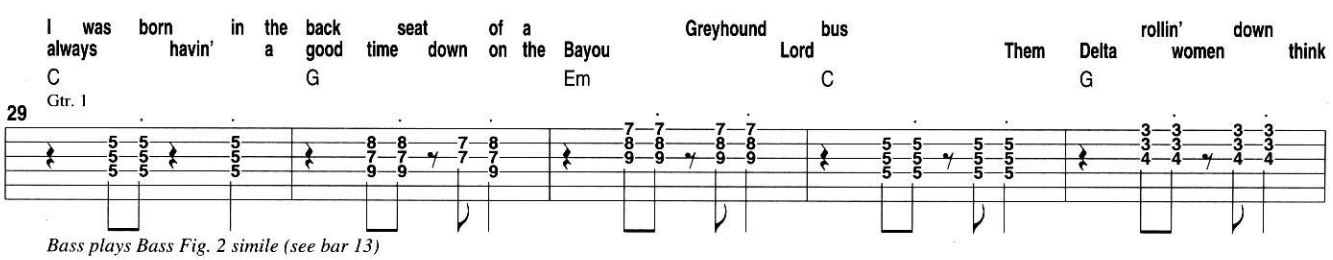


C 1st and 2nd Verses (0:26, 1:35)

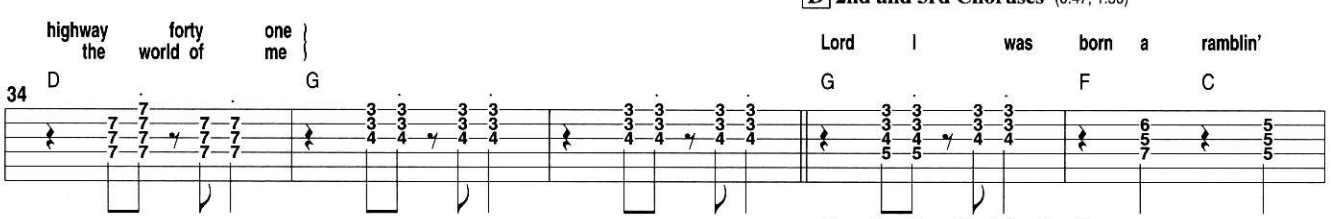




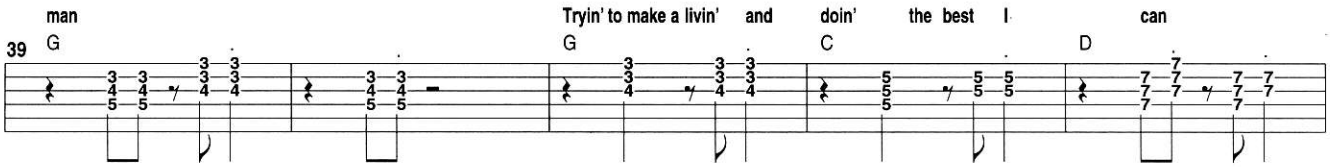
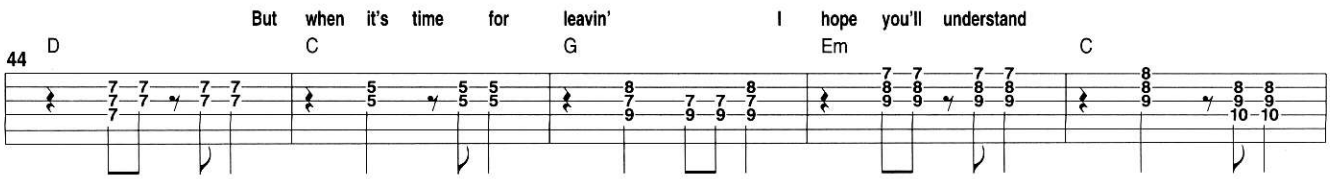


Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 simile (see bar 13)

D 2nd and 3rd Choruses (0:47, 1:56)

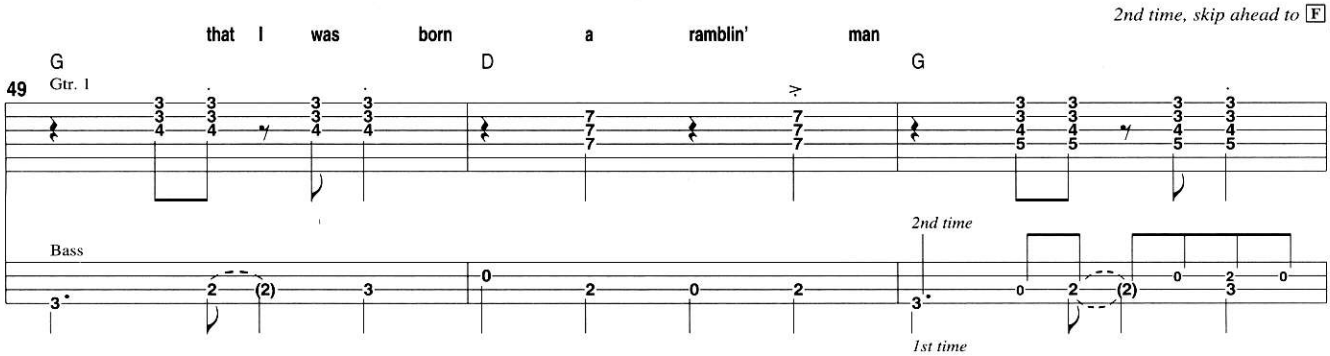


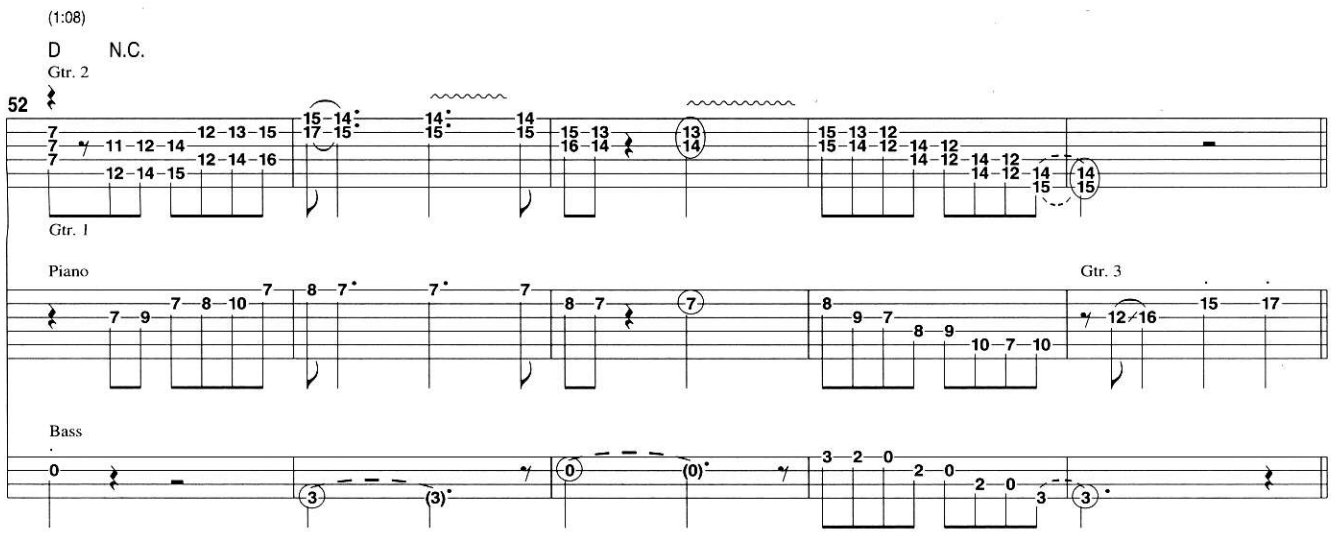
Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 5)

"RAMBLIN' MAN"



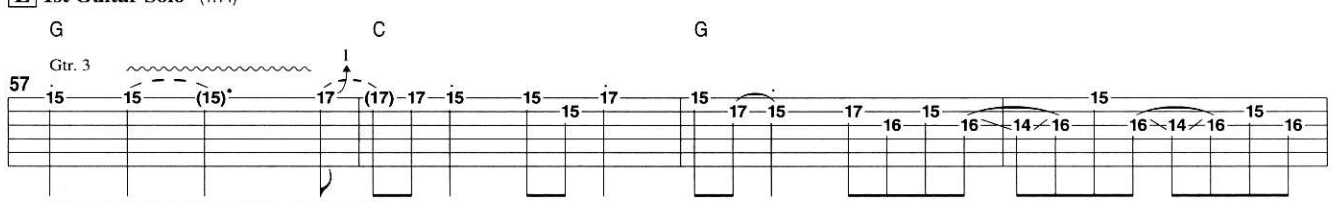
Bass plays first four bars of Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 13)

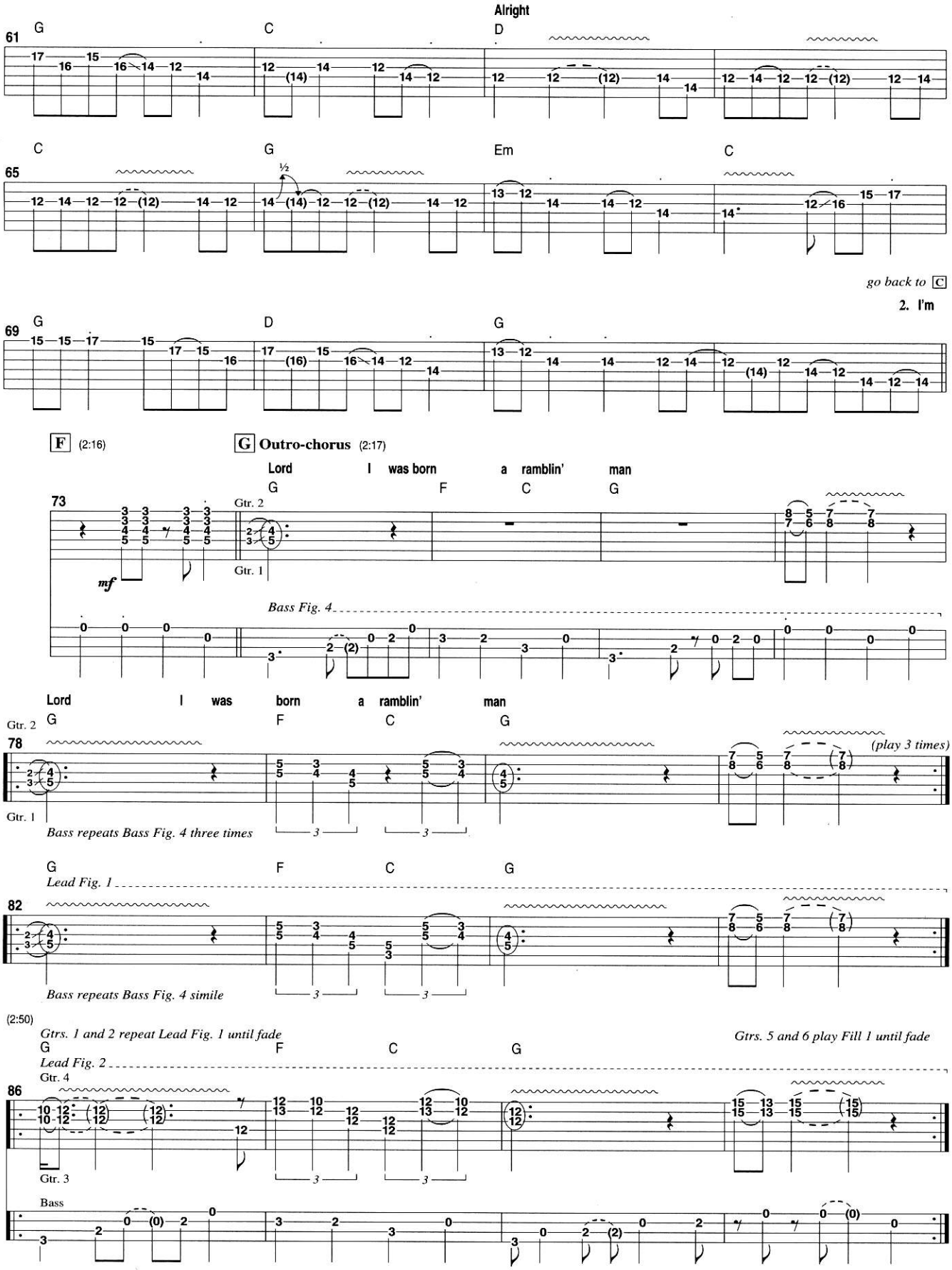
2nd time, skip ahead to F



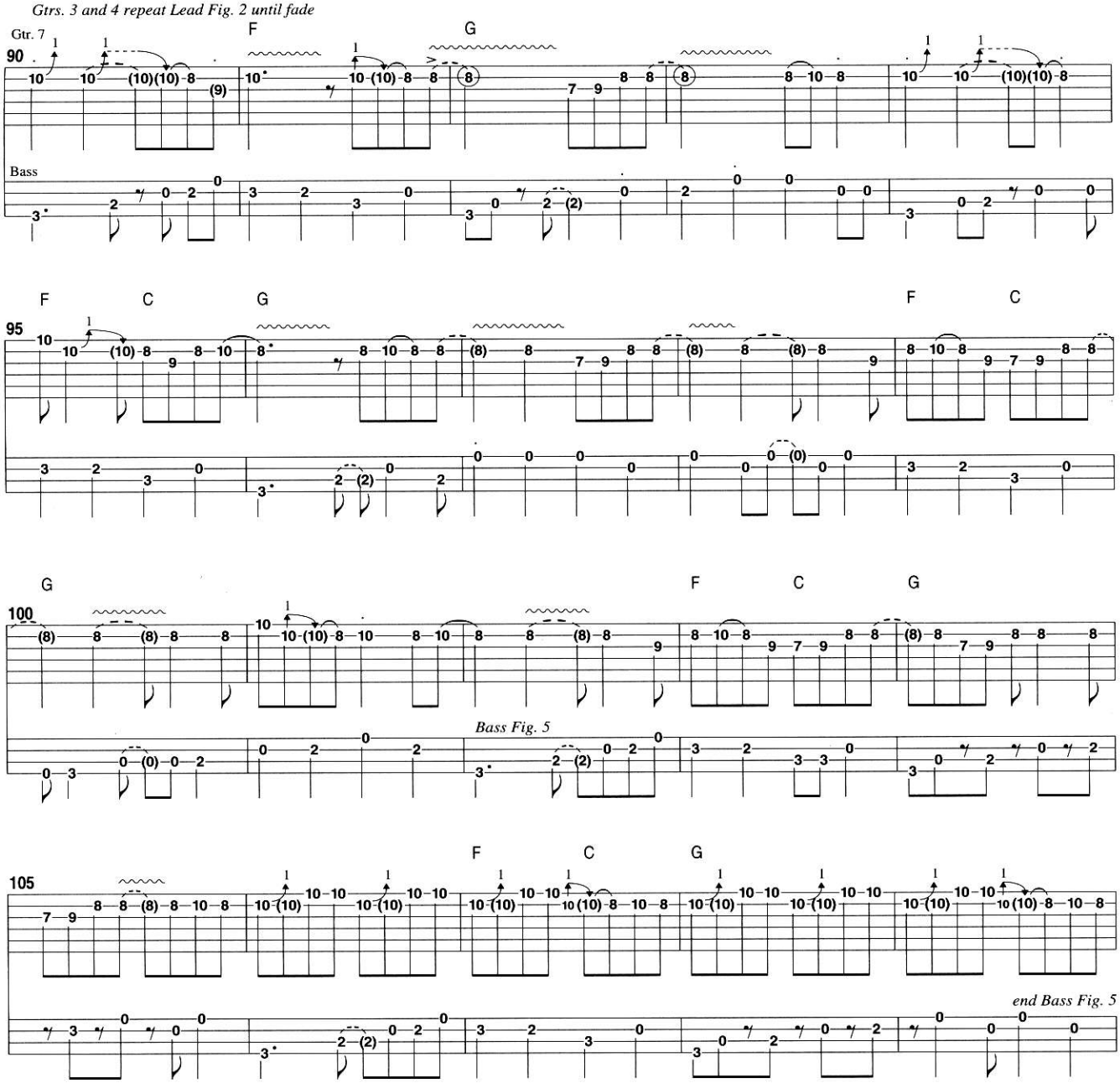
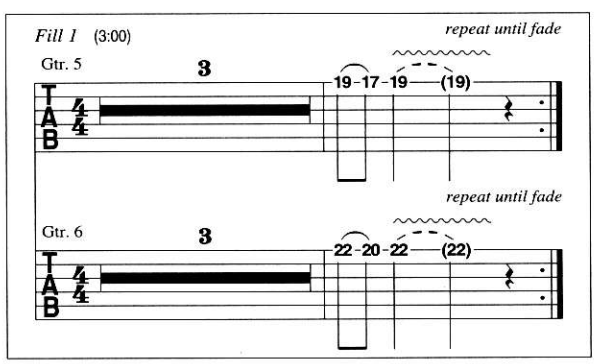


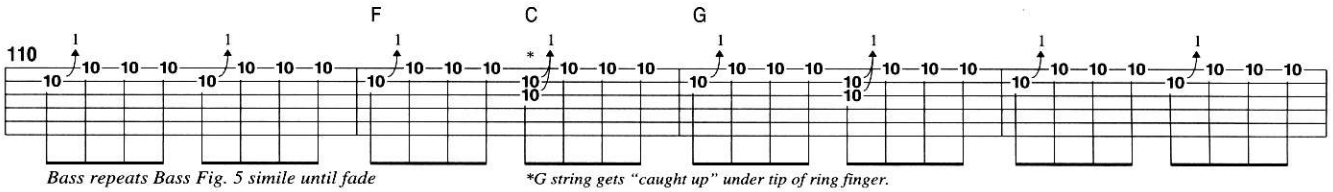
E **1st Guitar Solo** (1:14)

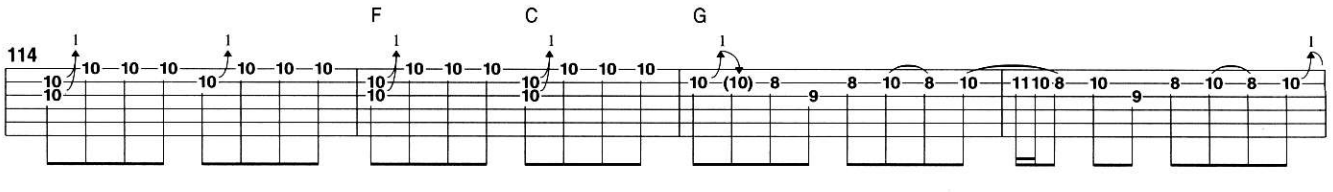


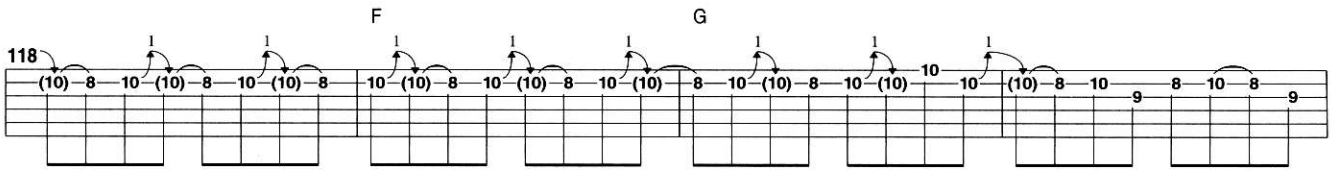
Bass plays Bass Fig. 3 simile (see bar 21)

Alright
61
G
C
D
65
C
G
Em
C
½
go back to C
2. I'm
69
G
D
G
F (2:16)
G Outro-chorus (2:17)
Lord I was born a ramblin' man
G
F
C
G
73
Gtr. 2
Gtr. 1
mf
Bass Fig. 4
Lord I was born a ramblin' man
Gtr. 2
G
F
C
G
78
(play 3 times)
Gtr. 1
Bass repeats Bass Fig. 4 three times
G
F
C
G
Lead Fig. 1
82
Bass repeats Bass Fig. 4 simile
(2:50)
Gtrs. 1 and 2 repeat Lead Fig. 1 until fade
Gtrs. 5 and 6 play Fill 1 until fade
G
F
C
G
Lead Fig. 2
Gtr. 4
86
Gtr. 3
Bass

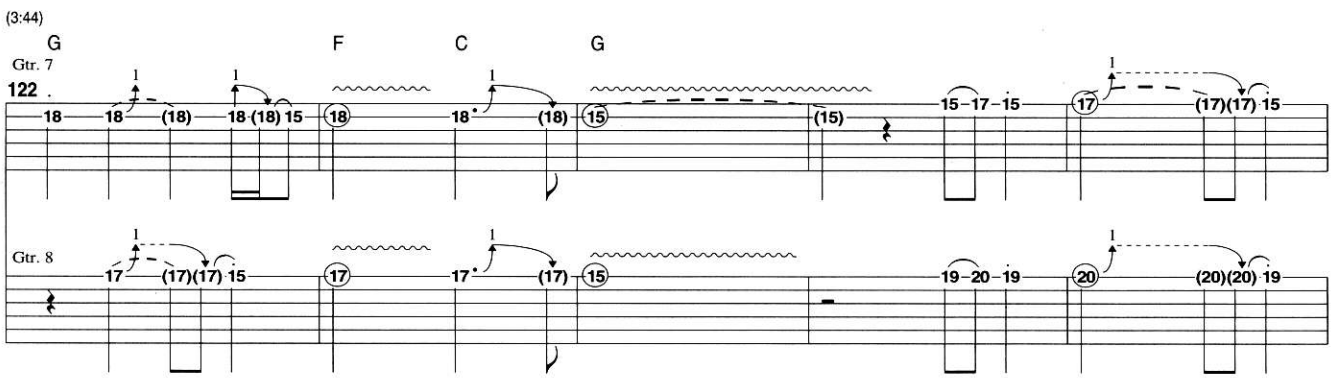
H **2nd Guitar Solo** (3:00)

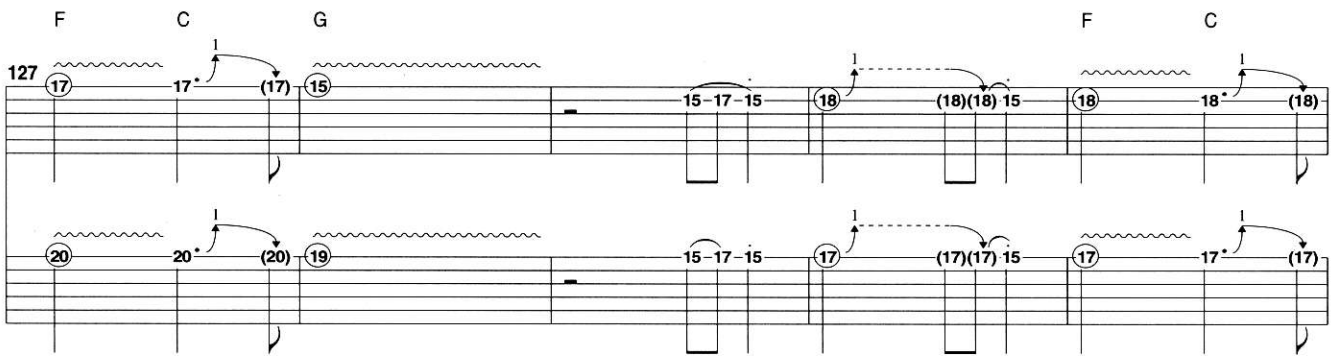
Gtrs. 3 and 4 repeat Lead Fig. 2 until fade



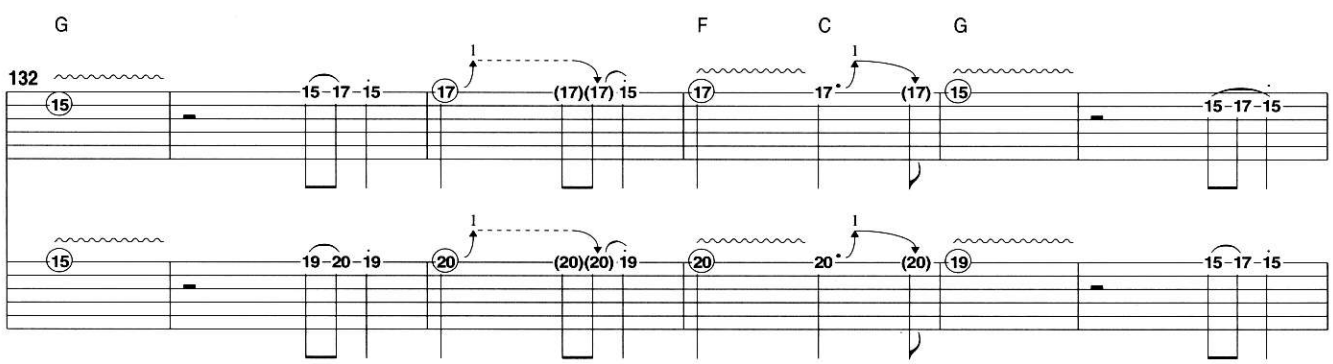

F
C
G
110
Bass repeats Bass Fig. 5 simile until fade
*G string gets "caught up" under tip of ring finger.


F
C
G
114

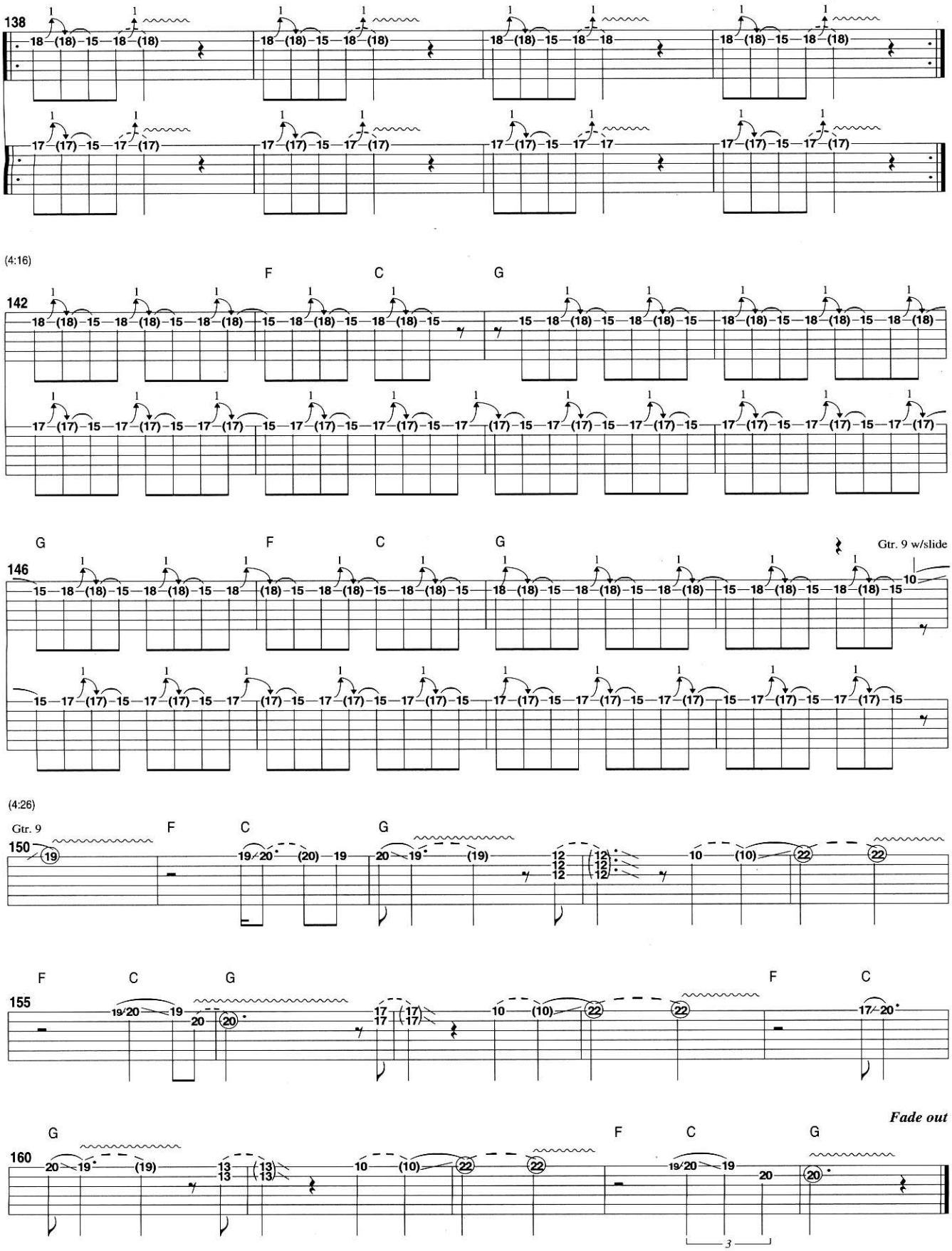

F
G
118

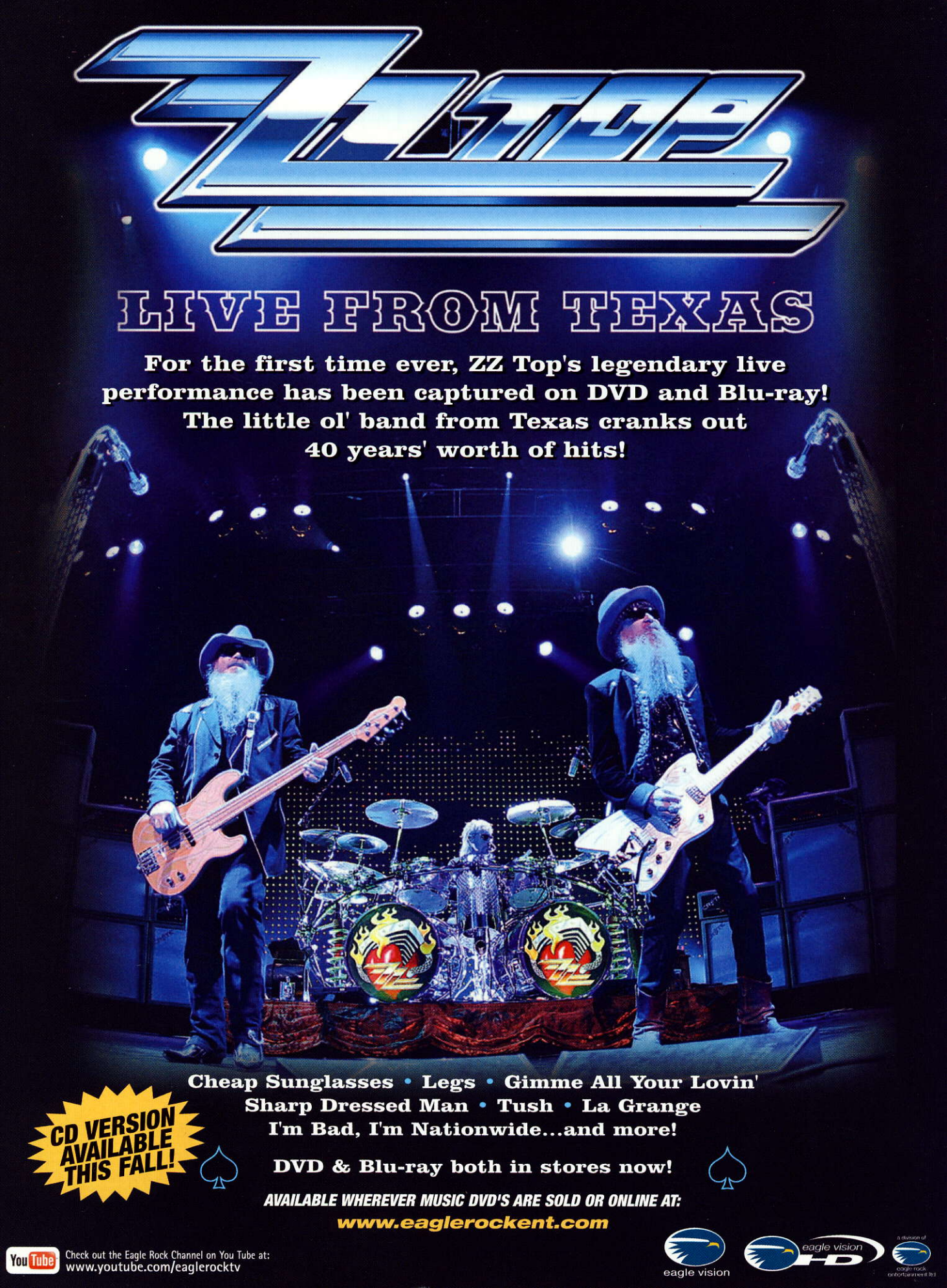

(3:44)
G
F
C
G
Gtr. 7
122
Gtr. 8


F
C
G
F
C
127


G
F
C
G
132

"RAMBLIN' MAN"


138
142
F
C
G
146
G
F
C
G
Gtr. 9 w/slide
(4:16)
(4:26)
Gtr. 9
150
155
160
Fade out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